

## Vatican: 3 priests arrested in Sudan

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Three priests working in Sudan were recently arrested, including one who keeps contacts between Sudanese authorities and the local church, a Vatican news agency said Monday. Fides, the news agency of the Vatican's missionary branch, said there were fears for the safety of two of the priests whose whereabouts were unknown. According to Fides, the Revs. Lino Sebit, Hillary Boma and William Nilo were arrested by police and accused of having participated in explosions June 30 in the capital. Citing a communique from the Khartoum archdiocese, Fides said that on July 28, 40 security and police officers entered a church near Khartoum to arrest Rev. Sebit. The priest wasn't there but went the next day to the police to be arrested, according to Fides.

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# Butler says disarmament talks with Iraq on verge of collapse

BAGHDAD (AP) — Talks between Iraq and the United Nations on dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have reached an impasse and may not resume, the chief U.N. inspector said Monday.

Richard Butler, speaking at the end of a second round of talks, said Iraq turned down his proposal for a plan of action to end the inspections that began after the 1991 Gulf War.

"We did not make the progress I have hoped for," Mr. Butler told reporters. "I do not know whether we are going to meet tomorrow."

His comments followed harsh criticism by Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, who said Mr. Butler was "serving the American policy" by trying to prolong punishing sanctions on Iraq.

Mr. Aziz said the U.N. Special Commission was "back to its old games, to its old tricks."

The commission, which Mr. Butler heads, is responsible for ensuring that Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction, as required by U.N. resolutions that followed the Gulf war.

The comments by both sides followed some opti-

mism that they were on track to ending the inspections. But after the two rounds of talks Monday, the two sides seemed headed for a crisis.

The Security Council has said that the sanctions — including a ban on air travel and limits on the sale of oil — will not be lifted until the commission ensures the weapons have been destroyed.

Mr. Aziz accused Mr. Butler's team of ignoring the country's progress in eliminating its weaponry and instead focusing on "minor issues which make no sense from the angle of disarmament."

"Since this is the wish of the American administration to perpetuate the situation, to prolong the current situation, to keep the sanctions on the people of Iraq... as long as this is the American wish, you [Mr. Butler] are serving the American policy," he said.

Neither Mr. Aziz nor Mr. Butler gave specifics on what was discussed Monday, but the "blueprint" Mr. Butler presented the Iraqis during his last visit in June calls for further disclosures about the country's missile programme and biological and chemical weaponry.

Mr. Aziz repeated Iraq's

earlier contention that Iraq "does not have any weapons of mass destruction."

Last month, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein said that the sanctions must be lifted this year — the first time he had set a deadline. Iraq says the sanctions have caused

widespread poverty, malnutrition and illnesses among its 22 million people.

Mr. Butler was scheduled to remain in Baghdad until Wednesday.

Iraq's refusal to open presidential sites to U.N. inspectors earlier this year brought the region to the

brink of war.

The United States and Britain sent warplanes and ships to the Gulf, threatening military action to force Iraq to cooperate. The crisis was defused in February through an agreement negotiated by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

## Iraq arrests two men who made attempt on Uday's life

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said on Monday it had arrested two gunmen accused of opening fire and severely wounding President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday 19 months ago.

The Iraqi General Police Directorate, in a statement carried by the official Iraqi News Agency (INA), accused a "foreign neighbouring country" which it did not name for carrying out the attack against Uday on Dec. 12, 1996.

Iraq and Uday have blamed Iran for the attack. Iranian officials deny that Tehran was behind the shooting.

The statement said the name of the country had not been disclosed in order to give time for "Iraqi authorities concerned to inform officials of that state through the right channels in order to know their reaction to such vicious involvement."

The statement named the two arrested by the police as Abdul Hussein Jalid Ashour Shalal and Sabah Sa'aisa Kanawi Naser.

It said there were three more others involved in the attack but they were still at

large.

They were named as Mu'ayad Radhi Hussein, Saliman Shareef Daffar and Tahseen Majeed Abd Maktoob. The statement said they had escaped to the "neighbouring foreign country."

It said Shalal was the one who had fired at Uday while Naser had been responsible for "preparing requirements of the... operation in Iraq and in a neighbouring country."

Uday was badly wounded in the attack when unidentified assailants opened fire on his car while driving in Baghdad's wealthy Al Mansour district.

Uday underwent several medical operations after the incident, the last on April 12, 1997 on his left leg. Foreign doctors were said to have helped treat Uday, who is chairman of Iraq's National Olympic Committee, owns a daily and several weekly newspapers and runs the Shabab television station.

Uday has been often shown by his television station standing and receiving public delegations.

## White House to continue battle to block testimony

WASHINGTON (AP) — With pressure growing for President Bill Clinton to explain his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, the White House decided Monday to continue the legal fight seeking to block testimony by presidential confidant Bruce Lindsey, an official said.

The administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the White House would appeal a decision last month by a three-judge appeals court panel that ordered Mr. Lindsey to testify before a grand jury. The judges rejected arguments that his testimony was protected by attorney-client privilege.

The official said the White House was leaning toward an appeal directly to the Supreme Court, bypassing a chance to appeal to the full U.S. Court of Appeals. A final decision was to be announced later Monday.

Mr. Lindsey, a deputy White House counsel and Clinton's closest adviser, has declined to answer several of prosecutors' questions in the Lewinsky case, arguing that disclosing his conversations with the president would violate Mr. Clinton's right

to confidential legal advice.

But both the judge overseeing the grand jury and a three-judge appeals court panel ruled that a government lawyer could not use the attorney-client privilege to keep from testifying in a federal criminal investigation of alleged government misconduct.

Mr. Clinton escaped the pressure-cooker atmosphere in Washington over the weekend by raising \$2 million for the Democratic Party in the fashionable Hampton area of Long Island, where he partied with Hollywood and Wall Street supporters and greeted friendly residents and visitors who reached out to touch him.

He returned to fresh calls to come clean about the nature of his contacts with Ms. Lewinsky, the former White House intern who under an immunity deal apparently has agreed to tell Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr she had a sexual relationship with the president.

Mr. Starr also is investigating whether Mr. Clinton urged her to lie about an affair. Mr. Clinton has denied any affair publicly and under oath he will testify on Aug. 11 to a grand jury investi-

gating the case.

In Toronto, after giving a speech about the Supreme Court, Mr. Starr indicated to reporters Monday that he would show deference to the presidency.

"One of the things that I want to make clear is that it is very important we respect our institutions of government and seek to discharge the duties that we have, in a way that is very respectful of the institutions of our government," Mr. Starr commented.

If Mr. Starr finds potential evidence of impeachable offences concerning the Lewinsky matter, the Whitewater land deal in Arkansas and other investigations concerning Mr. Clinton, he would submit a report to the House. The House Judiciary Committee would then decide whether to initiate impeachment proceedings.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch said he thought Congress would forgive Mr. Clinton if the case was solely a matter of sexual misconduct and if other factors, such as obstruction of justice, were not involved.

## Israel razes Arab home rebuilt by peace activists

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli army demolished on Monday a Palestinian home near occupied Jerusalem which had already been razed by troops in July and then rebuilt over the weekend with the help of Jewish peace groups, witnesses said.

Soldiers moved into the village of Anata at dawn and used a bulldozer to destroy the four-room house belonging to Salim Shawamra, a builder and father of six, they said.

Israel initially demolished the home on July 9 on the grounds that it had been built without formal approval from the occupation authorities.

The action sparked rioting in which 11 Palestinians were wounded by Israeli troops.

Around 60 Israeli peace activists joined with Palestinians to rebuild the house on Saturday, prompting

security forces to destroy the building again on Monday.

Anata straddles the demarcation line between Israeli-occupied east Jerusalem and the West Bank near Jerusalem's Shuafat refugee camp.

Local residents said all homes in the West Bank sector of Anata, including a number of shacks belonging to bedouin, were built without permits and were targeted by army demolition orders.

Palestinians frequently complain that the Israeli authorities rarely grant them building permission in areas under their control, including Arab east Jerusalem which the Jewish state occupied in 1967.

Mr. Shawamra told reporters he had asked the Israeli authorities for a building permit on four separate occasions but was turned down each time.



DISCOVERY OF CANAANITE CITY: Jalal Kazzouh (L), head of the archaeology department at Al Najah University points to a map of a new archaeological discovery as workers continue excavating the site Sunday. "We are in front of a new discovery, it is the discovery of a Canaanite city," which according to Kazzouh establishes ancient Palestinian ties to the land (Reuters photo)

## It is time for reconciliation among Arabs — Anani

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Jawad Anani said Monday that the time has come for intensive efforts to bring about reconciliation among the Arab states and to settle outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, marking the eighth anniversary of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Dr. Anani reiterated Jordan's call for ending

the Iraqi people's ordeal who he said have been suffering from the consequences of the crippling economic embargo and a settlement to the Kuwaiti prisoners issue so that they can be repatriated.

The invasion and the subsequent war have had their serious consequences on the whole Arab World causing deep splits among Arab states, added the minister.

Dr. Anani said it is urgently necessary for the

Arabs to transcend the negative consequences which resulted from the invasion and move forward together to deal with the future challenges.

He said that Jordan which has always called for reconciliation among Arab sister states appeals to all Arab countries to exert efforts and to work together to turn over "this dark chapter" and to look with optimism and hope towards the future.

## 'King Fahd in good health'

DUBAI (R) — King Fahd's heir apparent reassured Arab leaders Monday the Saudi King was in good health after being admitted to hospital for medical checks.

The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said Crown Prince Abdullah "reassured" Bahrain's Emir Sheikh Issa Ben Sulman Al Khalifa about the king's health.

He told Syria's President Hafez Assad the king "by God's grace enjoys good health."

On Sunday night, state-run television showed the king, now in his mid-70s, seated in an armchair and chatting to a stream of well-wishers, including Prince Abdullah and other senior members of the Saudi royal family.

The television showed no new footage of the king on Monday, but said the head of the world's largest oil exporter had sent telegrams to leaders of countries celebrating national holidays.

A well-placed Saudi source told Reuters King Fahd would undergo routine medical tests at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital. He said the visit was "nothing serious."

"The fact that all the princes were there being received suggests it's more than routine," a diplomat said from Riyadh.

"I can't see why everyone would feel the need to come back to Riyadh if it was just routine tests," the diplomat said by telephone.

"The king is frail and old and ill. I would

imagine...they all would want to be around in case there is any development," he added.

Another Western diplomat in the Saudi capital said the stream of visitors suggested initial concern "but it seems that [concern] might have abated."

SPA reported that the king had flown to Riyadh for the medical checks, but it did not give details about the tests.

King Fahd, who traditionally spends the hot summer months in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah, was last admitted to hospital in March for tests following a gall bladder infection.

He was released two days later. The royal court denied U.S. reports that he had undergone surgery.

"People have adjusted to the king being very sick and Crown Prince Abdullah running day to day affairs," the diplomat said.

King Fahd has suffered from poor health for several years.

He underwent gall bladder surgery in 1994 and suffered a stroke in November 1995.

In January 1996, King Fahd handed over the affairs of state to Prince Abdullah but reassured power seven weeks later.

The king, born in 1923, is overweight and diabetic, and uses a walking stick to relieve discomfort from an arthritic knee.

## Despite windfall, water crisis may bring trouble to water bottlers

By Mohammad Ben Hussein  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Amman water crisis, which has resulted in water shortage this past week, has been "a blessing in disguise," but not for local water bottlers who have doubled their production in a futile attempt to meet market demand.

The soaring quest for bottled mineral water has prompted the government to lift a ban on the import of this vital commodity to help quench people's thirst.

"The Ministry of Trade has asked the Council of Ministers for permission to allow importing mineral water, but the issue is still under consideration in the Cabinet," Mohammad Halaqa, the ministry's secretary general told the Jordan Times on Monday.

But local water bottling firms

insist the government should not allow the import of water because the sector will be harmed.

"Water should be considered a national wealth, hence, it should be exempted from all sorts of agreements signed by the government with the WTO and others," explained Thabit Elwir, the owner of Al Sabeel Water Bottling Company.

"If approved, the decision will be a big blow to the water bottling industry in the country as local companies cannot compete with similar imported brands," he added.

He said sales had increased by 40 per cent in the last weeks, forcing the company to increase working hours and to hire more employees.

The JD16 million industry normally produces 250,000 litres of water a day to meet local demand

that hit a 100 per cent increase overnight after the crisis, a local newspaper reported Monday.

"There is no need for people to panic, water companies in Jordan

Amman's main water source, is not contaminated, Jordanians from all walks of life are flocking to natural water springs to fill up jerry cans or are buying mineral

## Water ministry fines tankers delivering polluted water or charging higher prices

can provide the local market with three times more than its need," said Mr. Elwir.

Some news reports said smuggled bottles of water were finding their way to the market from Saudi Arabia, Syria and Israel.

Despite government assurances that domestic water supplies from the Zai Water Treatment Plant,

water. Traders say popular anxiety over clean water supplies helped fuel a water-related black market, forcing the government to speed up plans to allow imports of bottled water.

Jordan's water bottling companies have been working round-the-clock to meet unprecedented

demand since July 7, when many residents of Amman, especially the Western areas, complained of murky water with a strange smell and taste.

After a spate of contradicting statements, the government said it detected the cause of the unclear water and blamed the problem on "human and operational errors" at the Zai plant. (see related report on page 3).

However, it has steered clear of specifying the cause of the problem leaving most people in doubt. The Water Ministry initially blamed the water pollution on algae found in water supplies that climbed to higher than usual levels because of summer heat.

Meanwhile, Supply Ministry officials have tightened the reins on tankers ferrying water to disparate citizens, many without domestic water supplies for more

than three weeks.

Many have quadrupled their prices since July 7, and the ministry wants to ensure that the quality of water they are carrying is safe for use.

In the last two weeks alone, the ministry said it fined more than 70 water tanker owners, who were either carrying polluted water or charging higher prices, fixed by the government.

In other areas of Amman, many street vendors who normally sold fruits and vegetables, replaced their merchandise with cases of mineral water to reap quick profits.

"Psychologically, many people want to make sure they are at least drinking clean bottled water

(Continued on page 3)

megatech

Ask for your  
Free Insert

in:

- West Amman
- Center Amman
- Wadi El-Seir



# Israel considering release of Palestinian prisoners

GAZA CITY (AP) — Dozens of families of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails marched in the Gaza Strip on Monday, chanting "No peace without the release of our sons." The march came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly met with Cabinet ministers to discuss the possibility of releasing 100 Palestinian prisoners as a goodwill gesture.

Ahmed Tibi, an adviser to

Palestinian National Authority President Yasser Arafat, said he had given Mr. Netanyahu a list of 120 prisoners the PNA wanted to be released as soon as possible.

About 100 relatives of prisoners marched from the offices of the Red Cross to Mr. Arafat's office in Gaza City on Monday, carrying posters of their sons and chanting "No peace without the release of our sons," and "Netanyahu, you can-

not humiliate us," Hisham Abdel Razig, a Palestinian legislator who deals with the prisoner issue, headed a small delegation that met with Mr. Arafat following the march.

"President Arafat ... told us that there cannot be a comprehensive peace without the release of all the Palestinian and Arab prisoners in the Israeli jails," he said.

According to the Israeli newspaper Yediot Ahronot,

Mr. Netanyahu supports the prisoner release and has asked Police Minister Avigdor Kahalani to draw up a list of prisoners to be freed.

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were scheduled to meet later Monday to continue discussing the long overdue Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and other unresolved issues.



**FREE PRISONERS:** Palestinian women chant slogans calling to free their sons who are held in Israeli jails on Sunday. Hundreds of Palestinians marched with pictures of their sons to the office of President Yasser Arafat in Gaza City asking him to secure the release of their relatives (Reuters photo)

## Syria slams Arab 'passivity' in face of Israel

CAIRO (AFP) — Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam Monday slammed the "passivity" of Arab governments which he said was allowing Israel's right-wing government to press ahead with Jewish settlement of the occupied territories.

"If I were [Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu, what interest would I have in creating an explosion when I can do whatever I want and the sole reply is words," Mr. Khaddam said in an interview published in the London-based Arabic-language daily Al Hayat.

"Any Israeli military

adventure in the region would have serious consequences for the Jewish state, the region and the world," he said.

Mr. Khaddam criticised "certain Arab countries which refuse to implement the resolutions of the Arab summit held in Cairo in June 1996...calling for the suspension of normalisation with Israel."

"Two years on, we see continued [Jewish] settlement and the liquidation of the Arab presence in Jerusalem, the continued occupation of the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon," he said.

"Isn't all of this sufficient to implement the resolutions of the summit. What more does Netanyahu have to do for the recommendations to be put into practice?" he asked.

The Syrian vice president said he saw no point

in holding another Arab summit unless it resulted in concrete action. "The holding of a summit which results only in a press statement will only lead to the weakening of the Arab World and increasing Israeli intransigence," he said.

Mr. Khaddam said Syria was still "examining" a Franco-Egyptian proposal for an international conference of governments determined to save the peace process.

Under the proposal, which is backed by the European Union but has met with strong reservations from Washington, the governments directly involved would only participate at a later stage.

## Son of Saudi crown prince to visit Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Saudi Prince Turki bin Abdullah, son of the country's crown prince, is scheduled to arrive in Iran Tuesday morning for talks with the leadership, the Iranian president's office said Monday.

Prince Turki will be greeted by the head of President Mohammad Khatami's cabinet, Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Mr. Khatami's office said.

The prince's visit comes after Saudi King Fahd's hospitalisation Sunday and telephone talks between Mr. Khatami and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah on "regional matters" last Monday, Iranian radio said.

The telephone conversation took place two days after Iran announced it had tested a surface-to-surface missile. The missile, which has a range of 1,300 kilometres, is capable of reaching most Middle East countries, including Saudi Arabia, Israel and Turkey.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi said Iran's new missile strength is "essentially defensive and will not be used first against any other country."

Mr. Khatami said Iran would pursue its policy of "detente" with foreign countries and especially its neighbours.

Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia have improved since the moderate Khatami's election in May 1997 and last December's Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit in Tehran.

Former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani paid a 10-day official visit to Saudi Arabia in February, followed by a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi.

## Sudanese rebels say government ceasefire a 'manoeuvre'

CAIRO (AFP) — The main Sudanese rebel group charged Monday that the government's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire in the famine-hit south was only a "manoeuvre."

"It's a manoeuvre because if Khartoum were serious about restoring peace to Sudan, it would

have decreed a total ceasefire throughout the country," said Suleiman Bekhit, head of the Cairo office of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). "The combat zone isn't only in the south, it's also in the [southeastern] state of Kassa, in the south of Blue Nile state and in the

Nuba mountains," he said. The announcement of the ceasefire beginning Tuesday is part of the government's "propaganda campaign" ahead of peace talks the same day with the SPLA in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, he said.

The Sudanese army and rebels began observing a

truce two weeks ago in some of the most famine-stricken parts of the south to allow deliveries of food and medicine to hundreds of thousands of starving civilians.

Aid agencies have appealed for the area of the truce to be expanded as the crisis has assumed catastrophic proportions.

## Vasile: Romania willing to return property to Jews

TEL AVIV (AP) — Visiting Romanian Prime Minister Radu Vasile said Monday that he will submit legislation in parliament next month to return property to Jews whose property was nationalised after World War II.

"The bill presents a global solution for Romania to return property to all former owners, not only Jews," said Mr. Vasile, who arrived Sunday for a four-day visit to Israel.

Mr. Vasile was meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Monday afternoon, and was scheduled to meet with representatives of the World Jewish Restitution Organisation Tuesday.

The Romanian premier toured occupied Jerusalem's walled Old

City with his wife Marica Monday morning. The couple visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the traditional site of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, and the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site, and window-shopped in the Arab Quarter.

"It's wonderful, unbelievable," Mrs. Vasile said. "It's like a dream because of all this history." Some 400,000 Jews — half the Romanian Jewish population — died in World War II, when Romania was allied with Nazi Germany.

Many others left the country in the years after the war, when hundreds of Jewish properties were nationalised by Romania's communist government.

Mr. Vasile said five houses belonging to Jews

had already been returned to their owners this year, and that another three or four would be returned soon.

Romanian Foreign Minister Andrei Plesu said there were now only 12,000 Jews in Romania, but that Romanian Jews living outside the country were expected to ask for the return of their property as well.

More than 450,000 Jews of Romanian origin live in Israel, according to Israel's Foreign Ministry. Romania's president, Emil Constantinescu, won praise from Romanian Jewish leaders last year for publicly acknowledging the country's complicity in the persecution and murder of Jews in the Holocaust.

## Turkish army prepares to expel more Islamists from its ranks

ANKARA (AFP) — The Supreme Military Council, Turkey's highest military body, met in Ankara Monday to purge officers suspected of Islamist sympathies, the Anatolia news agency reported.

Over the last two years, the pro-secular army has expelled some 517 officers with suspected links to Islamists from its ranks. In June, at the council's last meeting, more than 160 officers were dismissed. For several months, it has been calling for a more effective

crackdown on Islamists from Mr. Yilmaz and his government. Chaired by Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, the council, which meets twice a year, is formed of 15 high ranking military chiefs and defence minister Ismet Sezgin.

The powerful army considers itself as the guarantor of Turkey's secular regime, and is extremely sensitive to suspected Islamist infiltration in its ranks.

During the meeting, which is due to last four days, the council has also to decide

upon the successor to Chief of the General Staff General Ismail Hakkı Karadayi, who is retiring.

It is likely he will be succeeded by the Commander in Chief of the Turkish ground forces, General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu. Several other army generals are being appointed to other posts. The army is seeking the strict enforcement of the current laws concerning dress code at universities and in public office, tightening of measures set up to counter Islamic

groups and a strict surveillance of organisations suspected of funding Islamist activities.

In March Mr. Yilmaz's minority coalition government proposed a number of laws to step up the crackdown on Islamists. These proposals have not been completely ratified due to a lack of parliamentary time. Mr. Yilmaz hopes that the parliament will pass them in October or November, after the two-month summer break.

## Trial of Turkish human rights activist assailants opens

ANKARA (AP) — The trial of 11 Turkish defendants accused of trying to murder a leading human rights activist opened under high security here Monday.

The May 12 attack on Akin Birdal, president of Turkey's Human Rights Foundation, left him hospitalised in serious condition for weeks. It was a major embarrassment for Turkish authorities, who admitted that a

right-wing terrorist, formerly employed by the state to kill people seen as threats to national security, was probably behind the assassination attempt. But one of the defendants, accused of ordering the attack, said his aim was not to kill Mr. Birdal.

"I did not give instructions for the murder or wounding of Akin Birdal. My instruction was to have him kidnapped and then get him to make a press state-

ment saying he regretted his separatist speeches," a former army sergeant, Cengiz Ersever, was quoted by Anatolia news agency as saying.

Mr. Birdal, who was present in court in a wheelchair, is a prominent campaigner against torture and the army's forced evacuation of Kurdish villages in southeastern Turkey. He has been repeatedly charged with inciting racial hatred or separatism for his

speeches in favour of a peaceful solution of the war opposing autonomy-seeking Kurdish rebels and government troops.

"If I had such an intention [of murdering Birdal], I bet, I would have his brain splattered on the wall in 24 hours," Ersever told the judges, prompting vivid protests from Mr. Birdal's lawyers who asked the court to put the defendant's words on record.

### JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

### PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 ...Cartoon ... Pro Stars

15:30 Small Talk ... "Quiz

Show"

16:00 ...Border Town

16:30 Doc. ... Baby It's You

17:00 Doc. ... Skeleton Coast

Salon

18:00 ...French Programmes

... Les Coeurs Brulés

19:00 ...Le Journal

19:15 ...French Programme

... Fractales

19:30 ...News headlines

19:35 Step by Step ... "Torn

Between Two Mothers"

20:00 ...What Would You Do?

20:30 ...Encounter

21:10 Mini-series ... The Tenant

of Wild Fell Hall

22:00 ...News in English

22:30 Feature film ... Under

Cover of Darkness

00:30 ...End of TX.

### PRAYER TIMES

04:20 ...Fajr

05:47 ...Sunrise/Duha

12:42 ...Dhuhr

16:22 ...Asr

19:36 ...Maghreb

21:03 ...Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Swoffeth, Tel. 5920740

Assemblies of God Church Tel.

4632785

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel.

4622366

Anglican Church Tel.

4624853/4624811

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox

Church Tel. 771751

Arman International Church

Tel. 865897

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter

Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la

Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel.

4646138

Church of Presentation, Swe-

fish Tel. 5920146

The United Catholic Church

Tel. 4624757

The English-Language

Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.

892679

The Baptist Church Tel.

4628052

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology.

It will be hot and windy north-

west with moderate to active. In

Aqaba, winds will be northerly

moderate, and seas calm.

Amman ... 27/26

Aqaba ... 27/42

Deserts ... 21/29

Jordan Valley ... 27/41

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 35, Aqaba 41 Humidity

readings: Amman 33 per cent.

Aqaba 52 per cent.

Following are the highest temper-

atures expected today in the fol-

lowing areas:

Ajloun ... 29

Jerash ... 26

Um Qays ... 35

Madaba ... 34

Petra ... 36

Dead Sea ... 41

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Yahya Abdul Rahim 4126072

Dr. Khalil Al Tashq 475253

Dr. Bahjat Bader 533542

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 5550452

Al Asema pharmacy 4637055

Al Salam pharmacy 4636730

Shamseani pharmacy 4637660

Narvokh pharmacy 4633672

IRBID:

Dr. Isam Al Saifi 246554

Al Quds pharmacy 463777

ZARQA:

Dr. Tariq Hijawi 985425

Khalil pharmacy 985417

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs ... 4623101

Abdullah Tel. Repairs ... 5661101

Jordan Television ... 4773111

Radio Jordan ... 4774111

Water Authority ... 5660100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. ... 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53201

### HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special

Surgery ... 5921199

The Islamic, Abdi ... 5661317

Hussain Medical Centre Tel

5856856

Luamla ... 4630195

Khalidi Maternity ... 4642816

Ajaleh Maternity ... 4642412

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642462

Malhas, J. Amman ... 4636140

Palestine, Shamsan ... 5607071

Stomach Hospital ... 5660131

University Hospital ... 5353434

Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279

Al-Ahli, Abdi ... 5664164

Italian, Al-Muhareen 4771013

Al-Basir ... 4775111/26

Army, Marka ... 4891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 5622450

Amal Hospital ... 5673155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital

00983323

Zarqa National Hospital

00990500

Ibn Sina Hospital ... 00986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

00988900

IRBID:

Princeps Basma Hospital

002275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

002272275

Ibn Al Nafies Hospital

002247100

AQABA:

Princeps Haya Hospital 00313411



## Regent receives Sarid

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Monday conferred with Israeli Knesset member representing the Labour Party Yossi Sarid over the current efforts to overcome the obstacles facing the peace process. At the meeting, attended also by Royal Court Chief Fayez Tarawneh, the Regent emphasised the need to intensify efforts to end the deadlock in the peace process to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace based on the accords agreed on by the concerned parties and achieving the rights of all parties. Mr. Sarid briefed the Regent on his party's stand vis-a-vis the developments in the peace process reiterating the Labour party's commitment to the peace process and its keenness to place it back on track.



**LEADERSHIP GRADUATES:** Participants in the International Leadership Academy (ILA), part of the United Nations University, pose following a graduation ceremony and farewell party. The ILA is hosted annually with participants from 50 nations and includes workshops, political lectures and discussions by prominent international figures.

## NAF says decision to cut aid to Deir Alla family is 'old'

By Suba Ma'ayeh  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A National Aid Fund (NAF) official yesterday refuted allegations that a two-year old NAF decision to end aid to a family in a Deir Alla region could have inspired the family head to set his house on fire last weekend.

Local press reports said that Ameen Abdul Mahdi Al Dayat, from Southern Tawl in the Deir Alla area, set his house alight on July 31 after the family's monthly financial aid was cut off.

Adel Shamayleh, Director General of the National Aid Fund, told the Jordan Times that the monetary aid had been cut off two years ago, and that the man's decision to set his house on fire was due to "familial disagreements" and had no relation to the fact that his financial aid had been cut.

by the NAF.

According to a local newspaper, Mr. Dayat set his house on fire after the Ministry of Social Development suspended his financial aid of JD46 per month, rendering him unable to attend to the needs of his family, which lives in extreme poverty.

"Mr. Dayat is an employee of the malaria section at the Ministry of Health and Medical Care in Deir Alla and receives a salary, so there is no need for him to receive a subsidy," said Dr. Shamayleh.

However, Mr. Dayat's wife was quoted by the local daily as saying that the family's already poor living conditions grew worse after the Ministry of Social Development ended its assistance to the family.

An NAF source who requested anonymity said that Mr. Dayat received a JD46 monthly in financial aid from

the NAF between 1994 and 1996.

"Two years after he was given aid, the NAF discovered that Mr. Dayat was an employee at the Ministry of Health in Deir Alla. As an employee, he was not entitled to receive the aid, and therefore, it was suspended," said the source.

He also pointed out that Mr. Dayat owns 25 goats and in 1996, a tent with fixtures, 18 blankets and four mattresses were disbursed to him by the Ministry of Social Development.

The source pointed out that the NAF conducted a social study after the house was burned in order to allocate monetary aid for the family since they are now without any financial support as Mr. Dayat is in jail being detained for investigation. He added that the family received 10 blankets.

## American expert denies reports on ongoing water investigation, ministry reaffirms water is safe

AMMAN (J.T.) — American water expert Michael Ring Monday denied reports alleging that he submitted a report to the government about the result of his investigation about the water pollution problem in Jordan.

"I was amazed to see a report attributed to Stanley Consultants dated August 3, 1998, published in some Jordanian newspapers. I was equally amazed to find that these newspapers reported that I left Amman yesterday in a great hurry," Mr. Ring said.

"I assure you I am still here and will remain to provide assistance to the Water Authority during this period," Mr. Ring added.

Mr. Ring who represents Stanley Consultants, employed by the Jordanian government to examine the source of water pollution said: "As a water treatment expert despatched by Stanley Consultants, I want to assure everyone including the press that our work is still in progress and that no final conclusions have yet been reached. No report of our work has been submitted to the Water

Authority or the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, nor do we subscribe to the conclusion reported in papers headlines."

Refuting the allegations published Monday, Mr. Ring said: "These headlines are wrong and are misleading to the public. The reports in the newspapers are based on incomplete data and do not accurately reflect the situation."

Stanley Consultants is a professional and respectable consulting firm with a long history of involvement with the Amman water supply system.

Mr. Ring concluded by saying that "we cannot and will not be party to such misleading reports."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health and Medical Care Monday issued a statement about the reports on water as published in the daily newspapers, reaffirming its earlier statements concerning the water situation.

It said that the Ministry's statement was supported by the World Health Organisation and Mr. Ring. In a statement Monday, the min-

istry reaffirmed that water treated at Zai Water Treatment Plant and pumped for human consumption is fit for humans in terms of germs content which is within the internationally-accepted levels. The ministry said it is continuing its tests, which proved so far that the water does not contain any chemicals beyond the health safety level as was proved by the Royal Scientific Society (RSS).

Additionally, the ministry said that after studying the microscopic analyses conducted on samples of water coming out from Zai, the RSS proved that water contains dead larvae which are not parasitic and not harmful to health. As a precautionary measure, the ministry has asked the public to boil the water before drinking.

The ministry also said that no increase in diarrhoea cases in any part of the Kingdom, including western Amman had been reported and that all those cases were below the minimum level compared with the same period for the last five years.

The ministry said it is examining

water in the resources and the distribution networks as well as in residences in the Kingdom.

The ministry is daily paying field visits to Zai Station to determine the cause of the problem; the resources that brought about this problem; an explanation for the colour, odour and taste of water; the ways to establish a precautionary system at water stations that can warn against any change of water quality; guarantees that such a problem will not recur; the proposed solutions for the long and short terms to the current situation at Zai. The ministry reiterated that water coming from Zai is not harmful and called on the citizens to boil water for two minutes before use it as a precautionary measure.

Meanwhile, Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin said that maintenance of Zai is under way and is almost finished.

During an interview with Jordan Television, Dr. Haddadin said the ministry increased pumping to western Amman as of Sunday night.

## Labour minister calls for greater occupational safety

AMMAN (Petra) — A three-day seminar on the dangers, handling and storage of chemical substances opened in Amman Monday with the participation of representatives of the concerned private and public organisations.

Participants are reviewing several working papers dealing with legislation on occupational health and safety, regulations and directions contained in the Jordanian Labour Law and the role of supervisors of occupational safety in industrial businesses.

Addressing the opening session of this seminar which was organised by the Ministry of Labour in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Minister of Labour Mahdi Farhan said this seminar conforms with the ministry's concern to reduce occupational injuries, some of which have led to death.

Dr. Farhan said the ministry wants to see that workers at different industrial and other businesses enjoy occupational safety and receive weekend leaves, and be provided with the necessary means to increase production.

Dr. Farhan said the ministry is determined to apply the law firmly and to impose penalties against violators to deter



Mahdi Farhan  
any violation of the regulations.

He said labour inspectors are required to visit the institutions, farms and factories throughout the Kingdom to inspect the health and social condition of the workers and to warn against sources of danger.

Dr. Farhan called on institutions to open the way for Jordanian job seekers and give them priority over non-Jordanians in employment.

Dr. Taleb Rifai, who represented the ILO at the meeting held at the Amman Chamber of Industry, pointed out that the seminar was one in a series of meetings which the ILO is organising in cooperation with the government to help achieve the organisation's objectives of improving the workplace environment.

## Women activists examine changing marriage law

By Rana Hussein  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian women activists, who have recently launched a nation-wide campaign to raise the legal age of marriage to 18 for both sexes, Monday said they are studying the possibility of changing legislation concerning marriage.

Current legislation allows females to marry at the age of 15 and men at 16, one factor sociologists have blamed for rising divorce rates.

Recent reports have indicated that early marriages are among the leading causes of divorce, with 86 per cent of separation occurring among couples who married before reaching the age of 21.

Jordanian Women Union (JWU) president Ameen Zou'bi said that the union has finished collecting more than the necessary number of signatures which "will be referred to the government and decision makers."

Ms. Zou'bi said the signatures and demands will be submitted to

national institutions such as the Jordanian National Committee for Women and the National Task Force for Children, for consultation.

"After consulting the recommendations and demands by these national organisations, our demands will then be referred to the Parliament and session for endorsement," she said.

She told the Jordan Times on Monday that this was the final phase of the campaign, which included a survey in government schools and several workshops and awareness lectures in government and private schools.

"In general people were supportive of our campaign, but we sensed some frustration by individuals who believe that it will be very hard to amend the marriage age legislation," she asserted.

However, she maintained, "we believe that it is our duty to sound the bell and even if we do not succeed, this will pave the way for other institutions and individuals in the future to keep pushing for these demands."

In a recent workshop held on "Marriage Age," religious leaders and activists added their voices to those of women activists who want to raise the legal age of marriage, stressing that "it will ensure a solid family."

Other negative aspects of tying the knot too early, according to participants of the May workshop, are that it deprives women of further education, which in some cases prevents them from being aware of rights and allows their husbands to manipulate their destinies and status, which in the end will result in divorce.

Activists and supporters also argued that since 18 is considered the minimum age at which citizens can exercise most political and civil rights, the same criterion should be applied to marriage.

In addition physicians warned that early marriages could also make birth spacing less effective.

According to Ms. Zou'bi, this campaign was made possible by the collaboration and support of several national and international organisations.

## Associations end boycott of leading newspaper

By Odeh Odeh  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The professional associations Monday decided to end a nearly a month-long boycott of Al Ra'i Arabic daily.

The decision was taken by the association's council at an emergency three-hour meeting held at the Professional Associations Complex, according to the council president Hassan Jaber.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Mr. Jaber said that a statement published on the front page of Al Ra'i daily Sunday clearly reflects the paper's

anti-normalisation position.

This position was backed by the Jordan Press Association which stressed that Al Ra'i will remain opposed to normalisation (with Israel), he added.

The professional associations, a driving force of opposition to normalisation of ties with Israel, last month initiated a boycott against Al Ra'i for the publication of an advertisement for Israel's national carrier, El Al.

Mr. Jaber also announced that the professional association's council also decided at their meeting not to participate in a seminar on professional unions in Jordan which is organised by the Al Urdun Al Jadid Studies Centre.

Mr. Jaber said the council discussed the water issue in Amman and has decided to raise this matter with the government at every possible level.

He said the council praised the efforts of the engineers and medical associations in the water crisis and requested that they pursue their efforts and report to the council about any developments so that it can adopt a unified stand in this regard.

## Grandma urges children to go 'back to books'



By Munther Murjan  
Special to the Jordan Times

JERASH — With a pair of eyes filled with life, the energy of a teen and a child-like smile, Mimi Farah — also known as "Grandma" — a famous children's artist from neighbouring Lebanon — captured the hearts and minds of not only the young ones but their elders too.

"I am a child at heart," was the artist's own self-description. "I love working for children. I love the feeling of being a child. I love them for their innocence and I express my love for children in my art," she continued.

Ms. Farah has been in her line of work since the early eighties, recreating classic children's tales and performs them to unassuming young audiences who become an integral part of the play-acting.

This year at 17th Jerash Festival of Art and Culture, the Light and Sound Theatre has seen a number of works dedicated to children

among them Ms. Farah's show titled "Jad and Grandma's tales." The idea of the show is to encourage children to go "back to books" since in the age of high tech, most have abandoned the art of reading for the sake of modern visual media.

Grandma's mission is executed through "a lot of literary figures such as Pinocchio or the Three Little Pigs dancing and singing on stage in an interactive form," said Ms. Farah. Four actresses accompany Grandma on stage.

The responses to her works were more than positive and the turn out to see Jad and Grandma on the second day was a testament to the attractiveness of Grandma's act.

"So far this is one of the highest number of people coming to the Light and Sound Theatre I have seen," said one security guard at the sight.

Samirah Jubor, a mother of three who brought her children to see the play said was impressed.

"We do not have this type of theatre in Jordan. The use of music, words, and dancing is so imaginative," she said. "Yet it is so educational."

From beginning to end, one can sense the level of proficiency of the work by the audience's active responses. Theatre goes spared no opportunity to sing, clap or even imitate the howling of the wind when Grandma asked them to do so.

"This reminds me of my childhood," said Khalid Kanan, a photographer who brought his three-year-old son to enjoy the show. "My mother used to tell me stories just like these," he said.

"I believe that this type of art is valuable to everyone, young or old," said Ms. Jubor. "They can teach everyone about good, important values such as honesty, courage, love of life and animals."

These were precisely Grandma's intentions she started her band a decade ago.

"Because they are innocent, I want to help them remain innocent," said Ms. Farah.

However, some had their own doubts about the benefits to all. Ms. Farah said the show in general affects children of different age groups in different ways and that nearly every child comes out with something even if it just the name of a famous wooden doll known for his tall tales, "Pinocchio."

For almost two hours everyone who was a part of that celebration of childhood — both viewers and actors — was transported to a world of light, music, and colourful costumes, in addition to a magical world of fairy tales and stories that have mesmerised and enchanted millions of children over hundreds, may be even thousands, of years.

The troupe came from Lebanon, and made a distinctive performance at Jerash and will be return home after four days of a magnetic showing.



# Serbs press attacks in Kosovo after vowing that offensive is over

PRISTINA. Yugoslavia (AP) — Government forces overran another ethnic Albanian stronghold Monday and pressed their attacks elsewhere in the separatist Kosovo province.

Serb military sources said police entered Smonica early Monday after shelling the village near the Albanian border for days. The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said at least a dozen rebel fighters were killed.

Serb sources also said troops continued to lay siege to another border village, Junik. Independent media in the Yugoslav capital Belgrade said most Kosovo Liberation Army fighters had slipped out of the village for sanctuaries in nearby Albania, leaving a

few dozen insurgents who have encircled their positions with land mines.

The reports could not be independently confirmed. But Albanian sources said fighting continued Monday in at least three areas of the rebellious province, scenes of heavy clashes during the weekend.

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic told a European Union delegation Thursday that the government's latest offensive against separatists in the Kosovo province was over.

However, over the weekend, government forces systematically targeted homes of Albanian civilians, driving them away with gunfire and then torching and looting the abandoned dwellings.

The campaign to drive Albanian civilians from their homes is reminiscent of "ethnic cleansing" — the forcible removal of rival ethnic groups that marked conflicts in the former Yugoslavia republics of Bosnia and Croatia earlier this decade.

Mr. Milosevic has promised to restore Kosovo's autonomy, which he cancelled in 1989. But he and major world powers oppose independence for Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians outnumber Serbs by 9-to-1.

Kosovo is located in southern Serbia, the dominant of two republics that make up the remainder of Yugoslavia.

Sunday, the KLA said Serb police shelled about 13

ethnic Albanian villages in the Drenica region west of Pristina, forcing civilians to flee for their lives and then setting their houses on fire.

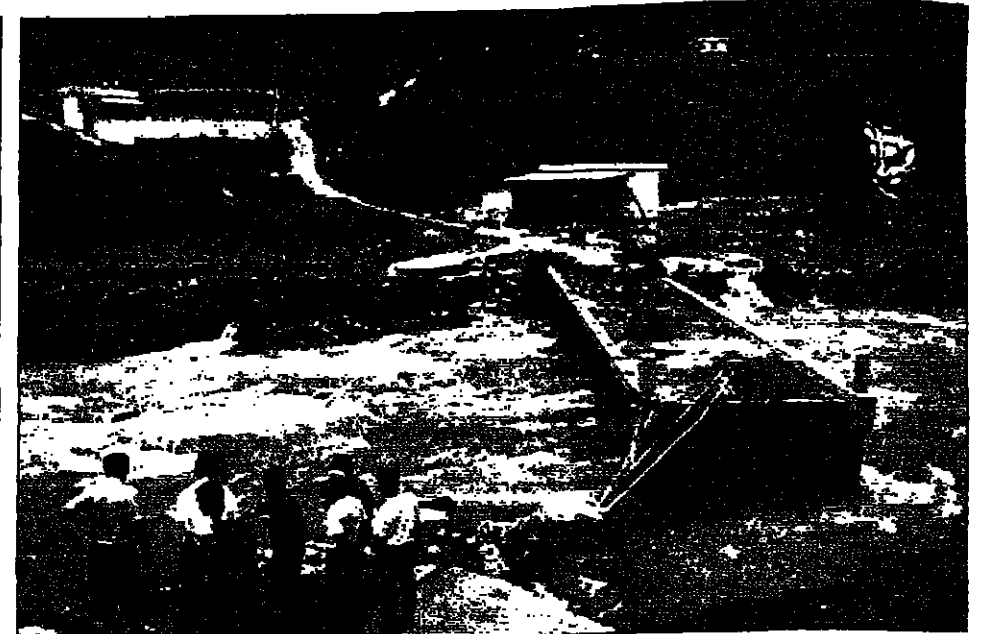
Eight Albanians were reported killed, the Albanian-run Kosovo Information Centre said Sunday. Serb sources said two policemen were killed and two others wounded in fighting at Prilep near the Albanian border.

Friday, Mr. Milosevic assured U.S. envoy Christopher Hill that tens of thousands of ethnic Albanians displaced by the fighting could return to their homes and international relief organisations could assist them.

In Albania's capital, Tirana, a Kosovo Albanian party accused the Serb-led

Yugoslav government of trying "to make it impossible for thousands of Albanians to return to their homes." The statement was issued by the Albanian Democratic Movement, whose leader, Mehmet Hajrizi, has been mentioned as a key figure in a planned Albanian team that U.S. diplomats hope can negotiate Kosovo's future with Mr. Milosevic.

KLA leaders are expected to announce this week whether they will accept a U.S. plan for Albanian politicians to enter peace talks with Mr. Milosevic. The current Serb offensive appears designed to deliver a strong blow against the rebels and force them to negotiate from a position of weakness.



South Koreans in Wangi village in the Mount Chiri's Piyagol Valley look at a bridge which was washed away during flash floods. So far 43 people have been confirmed dead, with 52 still missing as a result of the floods (Reuters photo)

## Korean rescuers battle time to search for survivors

SEOUL (AFP) — Tens of thousands of South Korean rescuers battled against time and the threat of more rainfall to find survivors of flash floods as the number of casualties surged to more than 100.

Soldiers, firefighters and police recovered seven bodies in emergency operations Monday, raising the confirmed death toll to 51.

The Central Disaster Agency (CDA) listed 45 as missing, but rescuers feared more had been swept away by fresh floods overnight as torrential rains moved up from South Korea's southern Mount Chiri national park.

Television stations put the number of those missing or dead at up to 110. Some 70 holidaymakers were trapped Monday by a swollen river, 70 kilometres northwest of Chiri.

"We are continuing the search, but bad weather is slowing things down," a CDA official said. "We are also worried that further rainfall will hurt more people and further damage property."

The massive three-day rescue operation is still centred in the Chiri park where some 60 campers were swept away by floods early Saturday, he

said. Most of the victims were campers who had been sleeping in tents by the rivers and valleys of the Chiri park without being prepared for flash floods.

A rescue helicopter crashed early Monday while trying to reach 39 college students trapped by torrents for three days near the mountain, leaving five firefighters seriously injured.

"The helicopter suddenly lost control, while flying low, and was capsized after hitting a rice paddy," a witness told Yonhap news agency.

One firefighter was killed and two of his colleagues injured during rescue and recovery operations Sunday.

The bodies found Monday were entangled in muddy riverbanks downstream, prompting rescuers to expand operations into the sea. Marine police dispatched 21 boats to comb the south coast.

Latest figures showed that 1,692 lives have so far been saved with some 189 people left homeless. Property damage has also surged to \$52 million.

The Meteorological Office has been swamped with calls by angry protesters who blasted weathermen for

failing to issue timely warnings.

"My friends and I fell asleep without any worries as we were not alerted to the rain by anyone," the Korea Times quoted Lee Chung-Shik, a 27-year-old survivor, as saying.

"I was awakened by a roar, got out of my tent and saw a raging torrent of water threatening to engulf my tent," he said.

Frogmen and fire fighters using rubber boats and ropes have combed rocky valleys and swollen rivers in the resort area where floods swept away some 60 campers and holiday-makers early Saturday.

Soldiers have mobilised cranes and other equipment to search for bodies. Television footage showed fire fighters plucking survivors out of submerged tents.

President Kim Dae-Jung ordered an all-out rescue effort Monday, a spokesman said, adding he also ordered the government to come up with measures to prevent further damage during this holiday season as more torrential rainfall is expected in the southern province.

The rain has destroyed scores of bridges and roads in Cholla and Kyongsang provinces.

## Rescuers may call off search for Austrian miners

LASSING, Austria (R) — Rescuers Monday considered whether to call off a 17-day search for survivors in a cave-in Austrian mine after failing to find 10 missing men in an air pocket where they were thought to be.

The rescue team had been clinging to hopes of finding at least some of the men in a so-called "dome" or hollow 130 metres down — and were trying to determine if anyone could possibly still be alive elsewhere in the mud-filled mine.

An announcement was planned for 1500 GMT.

"A medical evaluation will decide if there is a theoretical chance that anyone could still be alive somewhere in the pit," rescue operation spokesman Alfred Zechling told reporters in the Alpine

village of Lassing, southwest of Vienna.

"The relatives will then be the first to be informed." Hopes of finding survivors were raised a week ago when another miner who had been trapped in a cave-in 60 metres down — but then found himself swallowed up in a much bigger collapse.

The miner they had been looking for, 24-year-old Georg Hainzl, emerged on July 26 in remarkably good health.

There has been heavy criticism in Austria of the rescuers' slowness, apparent indecision and lack of coordination in what is the country's worst post-war mining disaster.

The government will discuss lessons to be learned from the effort on Aug. 20.

Abraham, a drilling expert from oil and chemicals group OCMV.

The lost miners were a rescue party who descended into the mine to try to find a colleague who had been trapped by a cave-in 60 metres down — but then found themselves swallowed up in a much bigger collapse.

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## Trial of S. Africa's biological warfare expert postponed

PRETORIA (AFP) — The trial of South Africa's chemical and biological warfare expert Wouter Basson on fraud and drug-related charges was postponed Monday to March 24 next year.

Mr. Basson, head of the apartheid government's chemical and biological warfare programme, "Project Coast", appeared in Pretoria Regional Court charged with possession of the illegal drugs Ecstasy and Mandrax, and multi-million dollar fraud.

In January last year Mr. Basson was arrested, after allegedly trying to sell around \$10,000 worth of Ecstasy tablets to a buyer.

Last October, Mr. Basson was arrested again on fraud charges involving at least 30 million rands (\$5 million), allegedly committed when he headed "Project Coast" in the 1980s.

He was released on bail in both cases.

Last week, the 48-year-old scientist reluctantly tes-

tified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) about the programme, after losing a High Court bid to avoid giving evidence.

But he spent much of his evidence refusing to answer questions about "Project Coast" on the grounds that he risked prejudicing his criminal trial.

He also denied claims by his peers, in earlier evidence to the TRC, that he had spearheaded research into a vaccine to sterilise blacks and a bacteria that would kill only black people.

As head of "Project Coast", Mr. Basson was responsible for infiltrating foreign countries in a bid to obtain technological know-how for South Africa's chemical and biological warfare capability.

In 1993 the Office for Serious Economic Offences launched an investigation into Mr. Basson's alleged misuse of state funds.

## Cuban exile said he lied to New York Times about bombings links

MIAMI (AP) — Militant exile Luis Posada Carriles said he lied to the New York Times when he told the newspaper that an influential Cuban exile group financed a bombing campaign in Cuba directed against Fidel Castro.

"I disowned 'The New York Times,' Mr. Posada told journalist Maria Elvira Salazar in an interview broadcast Sunday by CBS.

Telenoticias, a Spanish language news station owned by CBS. The Miami Herald reported details of the broadcast Monday.

Mr. Posada said he was trying to protect the identities of those who actually helped him pay for and plan the terrorist attacks.

In articles published last month, the Times quoted Mr. Posada as saying his bombing campaign in Cuba was financed by the Cuban American National Foundation and its late leader, Jorge Mas Canosa.

Mr. Posada told Ms. Salazar

he lied to the Times because his reporters seemed to be on the trail of the attacks' real backers. He would not identify the real backers.

"If you're working on intelligence or clandestine things, when you see that the blame or the weight of the information is about to hurt someone, you divert that information towards a person who cannot be hurt," he said.

"Jorge Mas was dead, and he could not be hurt by any legal action ... for having helped the Cuban cause," he said.

New York Times Foreign Editor Andrew Rosenthal said he was satisfied his newspaper's story quoted Mr. Posada correctly and added that the story noted that some of his claims could not be independently confirmed.

"He said what he said," Mr. Rosenthal said. "And the article ... talked in some detail about the limitations of our interview and pointed out that some of his comments were

confirmable and some were not."

Mr. Posada said the Times should not have published his comments on Mas Canosa based on his words alone.

Mr. Posada told the Times he is responsible for organising a series of bombings last year at hotels, nightclubs and restaurants in Cuba. One blast killed an Italian tourist.

In the latest interview, Mr. Posada, 70, did not back off the claim he was responsible for the bombings.

Immediately after the stories were published, the Cuban American National Foundation asked the Times to retract the portions that linked the Miami-based group and Mas Canosa to the bombings.

Mr. Posada also told CBS Telenoticias he is in contact with dissatisfied military officers inside Cuba, mostly colonels, and is planning sabotage attacks against the Castro regime in the near future.

## Blair rejects free flight criticism

LONDON (R) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair Monday rejected criticism for flying off on his holidays on a plane normally reserved for the royal family and for official trips by senior ministers.

Mr. Blair, his wife Cherie and their three children travelled on a Royal Air Force jet to Italy Saturday and landed in Tuscany.

Mr. Blair's Downing Street office said the arrangement, under which Mr. Blair did not pay for his seat, was normal practice since he would be meeting foreign leaders during his holiday. A spokesman added that the rest of Mr. Blair's family had paid for their seats.

Mr. Blair's Conservative predecessors,

Thatcher and John Major, had used an RAF jet every year since 1989 to fly off on holiday, he said.

"There has been absolutely no change whatsoever to the arrangements," the spokesman said. "The prime minister is scrupulous in observing the rules in these matters."

But the Sun newspaper attacked Mr. Blair for taking a "freebie" and the left-leaning Mirror, normally a staunch supporter of Mr. Blair and his Labour government, said the prime minister appeared to be developing "a worrying taste for the trappings of power."

Mr. Blair was also criticised over reports that a proposed cost-cutting plan to share a plane with Queen Elizabeth for royal and official visits had been blocked because the two cannot agree on the size of the

plane. Buckingham Palace is reported to favour a 19-seater long haul executive jet. But Mr. Blair's office is said to prefer a much larger plane with space for aides, security staff and journalists similar to that used by the U.S. president.

"This is plain crazy. How does the prime minister imagine that voters will react to such luxuries?" asked the Mirror in an editorial.

But Mr. Blair's office said it had not expressed a view on the optimum size of a new plane and that Buckingham Palace was keeping it informed of a royal travel review it was conducting simply as a matter of courtesy.

"It is nonsense to suggest that we're asking for a bigger aircraft," a spokesman said.

## U.K. to host international conference on child abuse

LONDON (R) — Britain is to stage an international conference aimed at stamping out child prostitution and the paedophile tourists who prey on them.

Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett said Monday.

"We need a real international programme to tackle the dreadful problem of child abuse — a problem that knows no borders," he said.

Children's charities say that one million children enter the global sex market every year and that in Asia alone, more than 650,000

children under the age of 16 work as prostitutes.

Mr. Fatchett, returning from a visit to the Philippines and South Korea, announced that Britain was bringing together health, social welfare and police experts from 25 countries for the conference from Oct. 6-8.

He stressed the need for police forces both to deter and detect the "sex tourists" who go abroad specifically to pick up and abuse children driven into prostitution by poverty.

"We need to remember that this is a problem we

have in the West and also export," he said in a statement.

The conference is intended to put in place schemes to allow police forces in Europe and Asia to share more intelligence.

British police have already provided training for Filipino officers in Manila in identifying and countering child prostitution and pornography and have run similar courses in Thailand and Sri Lanka.

After the conference, it is intended that a website for prosecuting authorities and police will include a quick

guide on Asian and European child sex crime legislation.

Social welfare workers from Europe and Asia will also go on exchange programmes and share much more information on preventing abuse and rehabilitating victims.

A horrified Mr. Fatchett saw at first hand what the international paedophile trade can do to its victims when he visited the Manila Children's Hospital.

"Many of the people using these young children are now from Western Europe and that is why we

have the responsibility. Seeing that problem brings it home to you in a very shocking way," Mr. Fatchett told BBC Radio.

"Working together across the boundaries of our regions, we can contend with these problems and make a real difference to children and their families," he added.

The conference will bring together the 15 member states of the European Union with Brunei, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

## Irish talks to resolve new parade dispute continue

LONDONDERRY (AFP) — Talks in Northern Ireland between marchers and Roman Catholics to diffuse renewed tension over a coming Protestant Apprentice boys parade continued Monday amid the debris of a weekend bomb attack.

Concern that Saturday's parade in the province's second city, Londonderry, could descend into public disorder prompted the two communities to begin discussions conducted via mediators at the weekend.

The province's independent Parades Commission, which arbitrates on routes and dates for Protestant parades, said it would prefer the two sides to resolve their disagreements themselves.

A spokesman said the commission would not be making any ruling while the two sides continued discussions, adding that he expected

them to do so for the "next few days."

"We would not do anything which might jeopardise these talks," he said.

The dispute, as with all parade controversies, centres on the route for Saturday's march, one of the best attended of the 2-3,000 held in Northern Ireland every year.

The 10,000 marchers expected want to follow their traditional route around the ancient city walls, marking the day in 1689 when a group of Protestant apprentices saved the city by shutting the town gates on the advancing Catholic forces of King James II.

But below the walls lies the Catholic Bogside housing estate, and year after year residents try to have the parade rerouted, accusing marchers of triumphalism and underlining sectarian divisions.

The parade is made up of groups from Apprentice Boys organisations and the Protestant Orange Order, which takes its name from James' eventual victor, the Protestant King William of Orange.

In the past, the Londonderry march has proved a flashpoint for clashes, and even riots.

Last year, a compromise was forged in which 100 marchers were allowed to walk the city walls, but the day was still marred by sporadic violence.

explosion in Banbridge, southwest of Belfast, injured 35 people, mainly shoppers.

Also at the weekend, David Nicholl of the Ulster Democratic Party — which has links to Protestant paramilitaries — said he intended to bring 500 hardline pro-British rule unionists into Londonderry Saturday.

Faced with such a fraught atmosphere, the two sides spent the weekend in talks at a secret location with officers from the Parades Commission acting as mediators.

Gregory Campbell, a local councillor for the hardline Democratic Unionists (DUP) in Londonderry, said he believed a ruling would not be made for some days.

"It may well be the end of the week before further progress is made," he said.

"It is a bit difficult at this stage to envisage an out-

come that would be satisfactory to those of us that want a peaceful parade as we normally had and those, some of whom seem absolutely determined to have a disruptive day."

He added he was "hopeful" rather than "optimistic" of a deal.



Students stage a die-in protest during which talks are suspended.

## Tension flares after Rwanda

PRISTINA (AFP) — Tens of thousands of South Korean rescuers battled against time and the threat of more rainfall to find survivors of flash floods as the number of casualties surged to more than 100.

Soldiers, firefighters and police recovered seven bodies in emergency operations Monday, raising the confirmed death toll to 51.

The Central Disaster Agency (CDA) listed 45 as missing, but rescuers feared more had been swept away by fresh floods overnight as torrential rains moved up from South Korea's southern Mount Chiri national park.

Television stations put the number of those missing or dead at up to 110. Some 70 holidaymakers were trapped Monday by a swollen river, 70 kilometres northwest of Chiri.

"We are continuing the search, but bad weather is slowing things down," a CDA official said. "We are also worried that further rainfall will hurt more people and further damage property."

The massive three-day rescue operation is still centred in the Chiri park where some 60 campers were swept away by floods early Saturday, he

said. Most of the victims were campers who had been sleeping in tents by the rivers and valleys of the Chiri park without being prepared for flash floods.

A rescue helicopter crashed early Monday while trying to reach 39 college students trapped by torrents for three days near the mountain, leaving five firefighters seriously injured.

"The helicopter suddenly lost control, while flying low, and was capsized after hitting a rice paddy," a witness told Yonhap news agency.

One firefighter was killed and two of his colleagues injured during rescue and recovery operations Sunday.

The bodies found Monday were entangled in muddy riverbanks downstream, prompting rescuers to expand operations into the sea. Marine police dispatched 21 boats to comb the south coast.

Latest figures showed that 1,692 lives have so far been saved with some 189 people left homeless. Property damage has also surged to \$52 million.

The Meteorological Office has been swamped with calls by angry protesters who blasted weathermen for failing to issue timely warnings.

"My friends and I fell asleep without any worries as we were not alerted to the rain by anyone," the Korea Times quoted Lee Chung-Shik, a 27-year-old survivor, as saying.

"I was awakened by a roar, got out of my tent and saw a raging torrent of water threatening to engulf my tent," he said.





Militant students stage a die-in protest in front of the presidential palace in Manila where a meeting between U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen and President Joseph Estrada was being held. The protesters denounced Mr. Cohen's visit during which talks are being held with Philippine officials to discuss a pending agreement on the resumption of military exercises between Philippines and the United States (Reuters photo)

## Cohen: No nuclear weapons on U.S. ships in exercises with Manila

MANILA (AP) — U.S. Secretary of Defence William Cohen guaranteed Monday that U.S. ships joining any future joint military exercises in the Philippines will not carry nuclear weapons.

An agreement that would allow a resumption of joint exercises has been opposed by several influential Philippine groups, including the Roman Catholic Church. Critics say it would infringe on Philippine sovereignty, promote prostitution and endanger Filipinos if nuclear weapons are carried on board U.S. ships or planes.

As Mr. Cohen met Monday with his Philippine counterpart, Orlando Mercado, about 25 activists demonstrated outside the military headquarters to protest the pact, called the Visiting Forces Agreement. Mr. Cohen said he told Philippine officials that no ships or submarines in the

exercises would carry nuclear weapons, and that the training would focus initially on humanitarian aid such as flood control or disaster relief.

Military ties with the United States have remained a sensitive issue since a nationalist Philippine Senate forced the closure of the last U.S. base in the country in 1992, ending close to a century of American military presence in its former colony.

The United States halted all joint exercises in the Philippines and visits by U.S. military ships in December 1996, when the Manila government ended a legal loophole that had shielded U.S. military personnel from prosecution by the Philippines for crimes committed here.

The Visiting Forces Agreement, signed early this year by U.S. and Philippine officials, would provide certain legal protections to U.S. soldiers

while on duty in the Philippines.

It still must be ratified by the Philippine Senate, which has not yet begun deliberations.

Critics say the accord limits the Philippine government's right to prosecute American soldiers who commit crimes in the country. It generally gives the United States jurisdiction over soldiers who commit crimes while on duty, and the Philippines jurisdiction over crimes committed while off-duty.

Both Mr. Mercado and President Joseph Estrada voted as senators for the expulsion of the last U.S. base. Both now support the new accord, saying the country must depend on military help from the United States until it develops a credible deterrent of its own.

"This is different because we're fighting for the security of our country this time. We have a very weak

military and our equipment is obsolete and antiquated," Mr. Estrada said Monday, adding that the country could be invaded by its neighbours with ease.

"We can't win — any time we could be invaded," Mr. Estrada said, referring to China, Malaysia, Thailand or Indonesia as possible aggressors.

The Philippines has one of the weakest militaries in South East Asia. It, like much of the region, has had to cut back on purchases of military hardware because of the impact of Asia's financial crisis.

Mr. Cohen said he was pleased by Mr. Estrada's and Mr. Mercado's support.

"We would like to continue to have a strong relationship with the Philippine people," he said. "But it's up to the Philippines to decide." The two countries used to conduct between six and eight military exercises a year, involving up to 3,000 U.S. troops at a time.

## Tension flares in eastern Congo after Rwandan soldiers leave

KINSHASA (AFP) — Tension has flared in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in the capital Kinshasa after President Laurent Kabila last week asked Rwandan soldiers to leave the country.

The Banyamulenge (ethnic Tutsis of Rwandan origin) are unhappy over the departure of the Rwandan soldiers, but we will not tolerate their disturbing public order," a high-ranking interior ministry official told AFP. "We are going to raid the camps where they are holed up," he added, requesting anonymity.

Deputy Interior Minister Faustin Munene declared a three-day curfew to allow the government to complete the sweeps.

A statement read earlier Monday over official radio by Communications Minister Didier Mumengi said: "Some 'unpatriotic people' have taken to arms to disrupt public order." It did not elaborate.

The statement pledged to put "all these unpatriotic people out of action," and asked residents "to keep calm and stay at home until the Congolese Armed Forces reestablish order."

Tension reigns in the three main cities of the eastern Kivu area, from where Mr. Kabila's successful rebellion — which was backed by the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan

army — began in late 1996, ending with the capture of Kinshasa in May 1997.

The airport at Goma, capital of North Kivu province, was closed down Sunday for security reasons after violent exchanges between DRC soldiers and Banyamulenge fighters.

The interior ministry source said DRC soldiers were in control of Goma, but that the Rwandan army had deployed tanks and troops along Rwanda's border with the DRC.

A witness reached in Uvira, south of Goma, by telephone from Nairobi said it was "extremely tense" there after shooting was heard outside the city overnight.

Humanitarian sources in Nairobi said that fighting was also reported overnight in Baraka, farther south.

Meanwhile, in Bukavu, capital of South Kivu, some 120 kilometres south of Goma, Rwandan soldiers released prisoners from the central jail, including Banyamulenge who had been sentenced to death for mounting a mutiny at the start of the year, an informed source said.

In Kinshasa, where Banyamulenge and DRC soldiers traded automatic weapons late Sunday evening until about 0400 GMT Monday around the Tshashi camp, an interior ministry

official said violence erupted when Banyamulenge soldiers had attempted to "commandeer vehicles" at the entrance to the camp. No casualty figures were available.

Shooting was also heard near the Kokolo camp in the west of the city, where sporadic firing continued Monday.

Soldiers remained deployed Monday at strategic points of the capital, and barricades have been set up on the roads by the two camps where most Banyamulenge soldiers are billeted, according to witnesses. DRC soldiers are searching vehicles for weapons.

Officially it is not known how many Banyamulenge soldiers are in the DRC army. Last Tuesday, Mr. Kabila said his army of 140,000 men included former soldiers of the defeated Zairean Armed Forces and traditional warriors known as Mai-Mai, who oppose the presence of Banyamulenge in the east.

He said that during his rebellion, 3,500 Rwandan soldiers fought alongside some 57,000 Kadogos ("young soldiers" in Swahili) against the forces of deposed dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

In asking the Rwandans to leave last week, Mr. Kabila said it was necessary to "restore order in cooperation relations with Rwanda" and

to "satisfy" those disturbed by the presence of foreign troops in the army.

It was unclear whether all the Rwandans had returned home. Friday, Kinshasa newspapers said 1,000 soldiers had left.

In Kigali, however, the Rwandan army chief of staff, General Kayumba Nyamwansa, said none of his men remained in the DRC. "The soldiers who came back last week, around 500, have to go back to their units. They are very happy to be back home," the general said.

The World Food Programme said in Nairobi meanwhile that the "situation is tense" Monday in Goma and Bukavu, but that the U.N. agency did not intend to cease operations "for the moment."

Spokeswoman Michele Quintaglie said the WFP was monitoring developments "very closely."

Armed incidents have been on the rise in Kivu in recent months, both between DRC soldiers and Rwandan or Banyamulenge fighters, but also involving the Mai-Mai and rebel movements fighting the Kigali and Kampala regimes from rear bases in the area.

## 'Pakistani troops blow up Indian brigade HQ in Kashmir'

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — The Pakistan army Monday blew up an Indian army brigade headquarters in continued shelling in Kashmir and killed a "large number" of troops in other positions, official sources said.

"Smoke coiled off and the flames were visible from a distant place, reflecting enemy losses," the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said, describing the attack in the Kargil sector of the front lines dividing the two armies.

Pakistani troops also destroyed "several positions" killing a large number of enemy troops, it said.

"This selective response by the Pakistan army has reduced

the frequent firing of the Indian troops on the civilian population across the LoC (Line of Control), the agency, quoting sources, said.

It said two children aged 10 and 11 died in Jura village in the Neelum valley sector while another civilian from the village of Sehri Pandala in the Bimber sector was also killed. Earlier officials in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistani Kashmir said 58 people had died in the past four days while hundreds had been injured.

APP said Pakistan had lodged complaints with the United Nations military observers' group, which monitors the LoC, against ceasefire violations by the Indian troops.

Each side has blamed the other for starting the firing.

Indian officials, however, began to play the matter down, saying the shelling was petering out Monday. The head of the Indian air force termed it "a seasonal phenomenon".

Firing along the 1,300-kilometre Kashmir border, however, was limited to just a few areas Monday, Indian officials said. They said intermittent firing continued in the district of Kupwara, 120 kilometres north of the summer capital of Srinagar, but other areas were calm. In Srinagar, daily life continued as normal.

Indian casualties Monday

stood at 34, while 58 deaths had been reported on the Pakistan side since the firing began Thursday.

Machine-gun fire along the unofficial border of the Himalayan territory is common but artillery barrages are rare.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over the state. Islamabad argues there can be no improvement in bilateral relations until the 50-year Kashmir issue is solved through a U.N.-sponsored referendum in the Muslim majority state.

New Delhi categorically rules out all outside mediation and says the territory is an "integral" part of India.

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## Arsenic also used in Japan mass poisoning

TOKYO (R) — Japanese police Monday said arsenic was also used in a pot of curry laced with cyanide which killed four people and sickened 60 others at a town festival late last month.

A local police official said the presence of both poisons led police to believe the culprit had aimed to kill as many people as possible.

"The fact that there were two poisons added to the food shows that whoever this was wanted to kill a lot of people indiscriminately," the police official said.

Police had initially said they suspected the person or persons wanted to kill the neighbourhood council president.

The deadly curry was made on July 25 at a neighbourhood festival in the western Japan city of Wakayama.

The four people who died that night and the following morning were the council president and vice president, along with a boy aged 10 and a 16-year-old girl.

Over 100 people attended the festival, about 450 km west of Tokyo, and scores of participants became sick minutes after the curry was served.

## Havel has emergency surgery to aid breathing

PRAGUE (R) — Czech doctors opened a hole in President Vaclav Havel's throat Monday to aid his breathing after the partial collapse of his lungs overnight, the president's office said.

In a statement, doctors said the right lobe of the 61-year-old Havel's lungs collapsed, requiring the tracheotomy "for preventative reasons" to sustain his recovery from intestinal surgery performed eight days ago.

There was no immediate comment on the results of the procedure, which was carried out at 11 a.m. (0900 GMT). A news conference has been scheduled for later in the day.

Doctors said the collapse of Mr. Havel's right lung had been accompanied by a fever and the medical team decided to perform the tracheotomy after other treatments failed to open his breathing passage.

A tracheotomy

allows a respirator to deliver oxygen directly to the body through the throat, but also permits the patient to eat and drink relatively normally.

It was the second time this year that Mr. Havel has needed a tracheotomy while recovering from intestinal surgery.

The former playwright and political dissident, who led the peaceful overthrow of the Communist government in 1989 in the so-called "Velvet Revolution", had a long-planned operation on July 26 to remove a bag bridging a gap in his large intestine.

The bag had been inserted after emergency surgery to remove a piece of the intestine after an abscess in his gut in April, which occurred while he was on holiday in Austria.

A tracheotomy also was required after that operation, but the procedure at that time was described as "routine"

and Mr. Havel's life was not in danger.

Doctors said last week that Mr. Havel had been having trouble breathing after the July 26 surgery because of a blockage in his lungs, but over the weekend he was removed from a respirator as his condition improved.

The president has been in poor health for almost two years. In December 1996 doctors removed about half of his right lung along with a small malignant tumour, and the former chain-smoker has had frequent breathing problems since.

There has been no report of any recurrence of the cancer and the intestinal surgery was not related to the lung tumour.

Doctors have yet to estimate when Mr. Havel, who has no control over the daily function of the Czech government and whose duties are more ceremonial than executive, may leave hospital.



Feature  
The wonder  
By Marian Nimra  
Special to the Jordan Times

I ONLY takes an hour to get to the Baqaa refugee camp. It is a long drive, but once you are there, you are in a world of wonder. The camp is a small village, with its own shops, schools, and a mosque. The people here are mostly from the Baqaa area, which was destroyed in 1948. They have been living in the camp ever since. The camp is a place of hope and resilience. The people here have managed to build a life for themselves in a place that was once a wasteland. They have created a community, and they are proud of it. The camp is a testament to the human spirit. It shows that even in the most difficult of circumstances, people can find a way to survive and thrive. The camp is a place of wonder, and it is a place that we should all be proud of.

to those with a sense of wonder, might be the best way to build a better world. The camp is a place of wonder, and it is a place that we should all be proud of. The camp is a testament to the human spirit. It shows that even in the most difficult of circumstances, people can find a way to survive and thrive. The camp is a place of wonder, and it is a place that we should all be proud of.

## After the final acre

By Edward Said

FOR REASONS that elude me, there continues to be some hope on the part of Arab governments that American impatience with Israel will soon reach the breaking point, perhaps provoking a dramatic new initiative, perhaps finally galvanising American power into actively opposing Netanyahu's tactics. This, alas, is seriously to misunderstand what is currently taking place both in Israel and the United States, where the likelihood of any qualitative change of the sort dreamed of by Arab leaders is very small indeed.

Clinton is opposed by a Congress that is solidly pro-Likud for many domestic reasons. Yes, there is an Israeli lobby, but the fact is that the Republican Party in alliance with the Christian right-wing, plus conservative foundations and business groups, and an uneducated, brain-washed public see in Israel not only a stubborn ally forcing its intransigence on the entire world but also an international partner which the U.S. should emulate, doing what Israel does in thumbing its nose at the very notion of an international community. And all this has the advantage of being a slap in the face of Bill Clinton whose problem-ridden administration is seen by many Americans as too enmeshed in the schemes of the U.N. and the international community, thereby curtailing American sovereignty and its capacity for using its power unilaterally.

The negative Clinton response to the recent meeting on war crimes in Rome, was, I believe, designed to convince his domestic opponents that, at the right time and for the right cause, he was capable of acting like Israel, defying world opinion in showing that his country's perceived interests overrode even the Nuremberg principles first articulated by the United States after World War II.

At the present moment, the Palestinian question has receded so dramatically in the public mind as to be non-existent. There are occasional references to the 13 per cent of West Bank territory proposed by the U.S. and accepted by the Palestinian leadership, but that is always hedged with discussions of Palestinian terrorism and the PLO covenant, thereby denuding the issue of land of any serious content. To make matters worse, the almost total absence of any Palestinian information effort in the U.S. or in Western Europe is stark. Gone are the academics, the students, the organisations that used to bear a message about dispossession and injustice: an immense void swallows what little is said or done on behalf of a people that has suffered the loss of its land and identity over the past century.

To an outsider like myself, what is going on inside the Arab World is no less discouraging. Leaders visit each other, talk about change and important meetings, more meetings are held, more trips taken — and nothing much changes. The fact is that the Arab World is totally un-mobilised, particularly inside Palestine, where the tragic losses are the greatest, the offences against ordinary everyday people the most egregious, and the Israeli plan most close to final realisation.

I understand that in countries like Egypt and Lebanon, for example, there is a serious intellectual attempt to confront the tragedy of the Palestinian people in discussions about positions that ought to be taken, petitions that should be signed, and so forth, but very little of this has any bearing at all on what Israeli troops and settlers do, which is nothing less than a concerted attempt at ethnic cleansing. The main difference between Bosnia and Palestine is that ethnic cleansing in the former took place in the form of dramatic massacres and slaughters which caught the world's attention, whereas in Palestine what is taking place is a drop by drop tactic in which one or two houses are demolished daily, a few acres are taken here and there every day, a few people are forced to leave. No one pays much attention, least of all other Palestinians, who live, say, in Ramallah, for whom the destruction of the main road out of Husan (a tiny village just west of Bethlehem) by the settlers of Efrat is scarcely perceptible or noticed.

In the meantime, the prosperous Palestinian communities in London and Amman go about their daily business, totally oblivious to what is happening to the dwindling

remains of their original homeland.

Huge weddings take place every day in the luxury hotels of those capitals, young people drive their BMWs and Honda motorcycles noisily up and down the hills of Abdoun and the leafy boulevards of Holland Park, and the impression is that of a long day-dream, with not much thought given either to the past or the future. Filled with pleasant interludes, school years in Harvard or Georgetown, vacations in Gstaad and Cannes, careers in advertising, marketing, investment, or construction, the privileged generation of Palestinian — and indeed Arab — youth, whose parents made their fortunes in the easy days of the Gulf oil and construction boom, go about their lives in a never-never land of tax-free spending that has made of it a class unique in the history of the twentieth century for its wastefulness and unproductivity. And it is this class that is theoretically entrusted with the future of our struggle against a ruthless and single-minded foe.

I recall that about 25 years ago, in reviewing a book about pre-1948 Zionist settlement and colonisation in Palestine, I drew attention to a remark made by Chaim Weizmann to the effect that this movement was beginning small, acquiring bits of land here and there, "another acre, another goat." The idea was that such a concentrated project, however modest, never lost sight of the final goal, which was to gain all of Palestine as a Jewish state.

Until 1948, Zionists controlled a little less than seven per cent of the land of Palestine. After 1948, they took over everything but the West Bank and Gaza Strip. After 1967, they conquered the rest of historic Palestine. With the Oslo accords, they consolidated their hold on the land by ceding approximately three per cent of the West Bank (which itself constitutes only 22 per cent of the whole of Palestine) to the Palestinian National Authority, in return for which the PNA won the right to administer Palestinian life without territorial sovereignty.

Nor is this all. With a goal to eliminating the Palestinian presence on most of the West Bank not covered by Oslo, Israel is doing two things: it is expropriating land for use by Israeli settlers and the military, and it is destroying houses. An article that appeared in the Palestine Report of July 15 by Muna Hamza-Muhaisen is quite stark in its findings. I quote her:

"Since the signing of the Oslo accord in 1993, between September 1993 and March 1998, 629 Palestinian homes were demolished by Israeli bulldozers: 535 in the West Bank and 94 in Jerusalem. Of the 629 destroyed homes, 268 were demolished by the Labour government and the remaining 361 were demolished by the Likud. Under the Netanyahu government and in 1997 alone, some 233 homes were demolished. In the first quarter of 1998, a total of 57 Palestinian homes and, in the week of 21 June 1998 alone, a total of 30 homes were demolished. Today more than 1,800 house demolition orders still remain to be carried out, threatening to leave another 10,000 people homeless."

The absolute, relentless continuity between Weizmann's simple remark about the acre and the goat, made over 75 years ago, and what is taking place today is chilling. There has been no modification in the essential Zionist vision, which condemns the Palestinian to a more precarious, less perceptible existence day by day. It is plainly there for everyone, Arab and Jew alike, to witness. No secret is made of this plan, no palliative or sugar coating seems to be required. They are taking the land detail by detail, inch by inch, house by house. Hamza-Muhaisen concludes: "By achieving all this, Israel will succeed in isolating the Palestinian population in three or four disconnected Bantustans, a plan known in Israel as 'Allon Plus.' This way, even if Palestinian President Yasser Arafat declares a Palestinian state in May 1999, as he is expected to, Israel would have created a new reality on the ground that would make it impossible for such a state to be territorially connected."

Unintentionally perhaps, Hamza-Muhaisen dramatises the differences between Israeli action and Palestinian reaction: they take the land, we declare a state. As Haidar Abdel-Shafi put it in a recent interview: what is the point of declaring a state yet again, since we already declared one in Algeria in 1988? How many times does one declare a non-existent state, and what is achieved by such repeti-

tions? Like Dr. Abdel-Shafi, I am mystified by this odd, not to say irrelevant response to a moment of the most far-reaching emergency. Israel is taking the land systematically, and we are more or less looking on, doing no more than saying "they haven't really taken it, we consider it our state."

The crying shame is that this has been our strategy from the beginning. Faced with a clear, concrete, practical, systematic activity — land expropriation — for one hundred years we have been unable, or powerless, or unwilling to do anything that might reverse the process. I have seen this dialectic in action all of my life, first when I was a boy in Palestine, then most recently a few weeks ago, as I watched Israeli troops destroy the tents of Jahalin Bedu and the village lands of farmers outside Hebron and Bethlehem. I stood and argued with the soldiers. I tried to dissuade them. I challenged them. I reminded them that 60 years ago their land as Jews was taken from them by a "superior" people, the Germans.

But the fact was that I could only watch and record what I saw on film. They had the bulldozers and the machine guns. I had the words and pictures, and nothing else.

We are an un-mobilised people. We are unled. We are unmotivated. We have not been able to concentrate our minds and hearts on the problem, which is nothing less than the robbery of our land. In the past few weeks, a number of Israeli organisations against house demolitions have been formed. They have demonstrations. They protest. But there seems to be very little on the Palestinian side. It is as if we have been anaesthetised as a people, unable to move, unable to act. They take the land, and we watch or, more probably, we don't even watch. We assume it is happening to someone else; we can look away, and go about our business.

What is missing is a sense of public urgency embodied in mobilised Palestinians inside Palestine, in Europe, North America, in the Arab World, who decide that the time has come to face the Israeli threat where it is occurring, on the land of Palestine. Even the figures of demolitions and land expropriation come from Israel. The best report on Israeli settlement activity is not by Palestinians: it comes from an American group headed by Geoffrey Aronson, who is himself Jewish.

I appeal to my readers for help. Why is it that when it concerns the open theft of our last remaining territorial possessions, we seem utterly confounded by what is taking place? Why cannot we mobilise ourselves to stand in front of Israeli troops, why cannot we organise the Palestinian workers who are actually building the settlements to deter them from doing that work that so harms their people, why cannot our leaders get themselves out of their offices and VIP cars and onto the fields and orchards of Palestine, protecting homes with their bodies, resisting Israeli soldiers as they confiscate our land?

Why this mania for bureaucracy, bodyguards, cellular phones, expensive shopping expeditions, for fruitless, stupid negotiations that sap our strength and our will and leave us utterly impotent as we witness our land disappearing before us?

I cannot understand our inaction and the spineless cowardice of our leaders who prefer to engage in the harassment and abuse of their own people than in safeguarding their nation and its territory. I cannot understand the paralysis of Palestinian and other Arab intellectuals for whom theorising about the best strategy is a higher priority than actually going to Palestine (this is easily done by Egyptians and Jordanians whose countries are at peace with Israel) to stand with a Palestinian family or village defying the Israeli robbers. I cannot understand why, after 100 years, we cannot seem to focus on what is important and drop all the other nonsense.

I appeal to better-informed readers for assistance. I can neither guess at the answers, nor can I provide explanations. I only know that very little will be left of the land of Palestine by the time we wake up. And then we will probably ask ourselves, what happened? Why did we let the land be taken before our eyes for one century, and why did we do nothing? This is the final, terminal stage, and it is here. Where are we?

## Jordan Times

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## Owed some respect

THESE LAST few weeks have been less than kind to Jordan and Jordanians. First there were the revelations that growth rate figures for 1996 and 1997 were much less than forecast.

Then there were the disturbing reports about His Majesty King Hussein's health, which everyone was thankful were short-lived as His Majesty himself candidly explained his condition to his people. And of course there was and still is the water crisis and all the resultant hardships it has brought with it.

The majority of Jordanians, who know very little and care less about the so-called macro-economic figures, knew all along that their economy was ailing. They felt the symptoms in their wallets — their incomes could barely carry them to the end of the month. They detected the malaise in the many unemployed young people in their extended families. And they came to appreciate that government figures altogether, especially figures about poverty and unemployment, are unreliable, to say the least. Jordanians also understand fully well that, apart from combatting corruption, the government can do little to rectify the situation. What they hope for is at least a measure of decency and respect. Decency for the truth and respect for their intelligence.

But the government, it would appear, has no respect for people's minds nor bodies. While the full story is yet to unfold, Jordanians were shocked to learn that the water reaching their homes was of very poor quality, that it looked murky, smelled foul, and tasted awful. The episode started in the first week of July, and now, one month later, the public is still kept ignorant of the full story. To add more injury to insult, water has been cut from some neighbourhoods for the third week running, water supplied by private tankers is very difficult and expensive to obtain and bottled water has almost disappeared from the market.

While we still hold out some hope of the good intentions of the government, its ministers and departments, we think that their management practices are at best faulty. It is unconscionable to throw the blame on frustrated, under-paid junior employees here and there. The entire bureaucracy must be reformed, and reformed now.

The taxpayer who pays nearly one dinar for a cubic metre of water deserves to get clear, 100 per cent clean water, and nothing less.

If that requires engaging the services of the private sector or foreign firms then so be it.

Meanwhile, despite the heat wave and the lack of water, Jordanians wait for the safe return of His Majesty King Hussein soon, and with that, a direly needed change of government.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek praised the Lower House's National Guidance Committee for amending some articles of the proposed press and publications law. But, he said, the committee's measures only represent 25 per cent of what was expected. According to the writer, the committee's amendments were fine but insufficient. The law contains unyielding articles meant only to tighten journalists' lips, said Dr. Fanek. He called on the Parliament to amend all of the unrealistic articles in the draft law.

Al Dustour's Yasser Zaatra charged that the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky fiasco was created by the Jewish lobby to influence Clinton's decisions on Israel. He said the Jewish lobby is manipulating the White House via the Jewish monopoly over the media. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is supported by the influential Jewish lobby, is exerting pressure on Clinton in order to make him succumb to Israel's demands concerning some regional issues, starting with the peace process, said Zaatra. The American administration's policy by and large is pro-Israel in many issues, but that, does not satisfy Netanyahu, the writer said. He said Netanyahu raised Lewinsky's case at this specific time because he believes that the United States can do more to impede the Egyptian-French initiative on the Middle East peace process. Zaatra said the Israeli prime minister does not want any country to force him to implement the Madrid accord. He said Netanyahu will try every means to steer the Clinton administration in Israel's best interest.

## AI: Hundreds of unfair trials of political prisoners in MENA

Following are highlights of the Amnesty International Report 1998 covering events in the Middle East and North Africa from January to December 1997

IN 1997 hundreds of cases of unfair trials of political prisoners were recorded in most countries in the Middle East and North Africa, while hundreds of other political detainees continued to be held years after their arrest without charge or trial. Torture remained widespread and in some countries systematic, and the number of executions recorded by Amnesty International increased significantly.

Some positive steps were reported during the year. For example in Egypt, the Supreme Administrative Court upheld the decree banning female genital mutilation from being carried out in state hospitals, and Saudi Arabia acceded to the United Nations Convention against Torture with limiting reservations, and to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

In Algeria 1997 saw some of the worst violence against civilians since the beginning of the conflict in 1992. In rural areas, armed groups massacred thousands of men, women and children with unspeakable brutality. Killings often went on for several hours in villages close to army barracks, but the army and the security forces failed to intervene to stop the killings and the assailants were allowed to flee undisturbed on each occasion. Security forces were responsible for extrajudicial

executions, torture and "disappearances," and state-armed militias committed deliberate and arbitrary killings and other abuses against civilians. For their part, armed groups defining themselves as "Islamic groups" continued to kill, torture, abduct and threaten civilians with death.

In October Amnesty International, together with other human rights organisations, issued an appeal calling for an international investigation to be set up into the human rights situation in Algeria.

International fair trial standards were routinely disregarded in countries such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, where secret proceedings and the absence of legal counsel were the norm. In Lebanon, scores of civilians were summarily tried by military courts. In Syria, dozens of people were arrested on political grounds, while hundreds of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, remained held since the 1980s. In Kuwait, more than 12 people continued to serve prison terms after unfair trials since 1991.

In Iran, followers of certain Shiite clerics, as well as hundreds of political opponents, writers, journalists and intellectuals were imprisoned following unfair trials, and some were held without trial. In Egypt, thousands of suspected members or sympathisers of banned Islamist groups remained held without charge or trial, some for several years, and hundreds of tenant farmers opposed to a new agricultural law were arrested. In Israel and the Occupied Territories, hundreds of

Palestinians were arrested on security grounds, at least 460 of them were administratively detained without charge or trial. At least 150 Lebanese nationals remained held without charge or trial for up to 12 years in Khiam detention centre in South Lebanon which is run by the South Lebanon Army (SLA), a Lebanese pro-Israeli militia.

Torture and ill-treatment continued to be reported in 16 countries. In Egypt, it remained systematic in State Security Investigations (SSI) buildings, police stations and sometimes in prisons. In Tunisia, dozens of wives and relatives of imprisoned or exiled supporters of the Islamist movement Al Nahda reported being ill-treated, threatened with torture, including rape, and asked to divorce their husbands; human rights defenders were increasingly targeted. The U.N. Committee against Torture stated that certain methods of interrogation used by Israel constituted torture. In the areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian National Authority, at least three detainees died in custody apparently as a result of torture. Forty Indian children were reportedly tortured or ill-treated in the custody of police in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Cruel and inhuman judicial punishments, such as amputations, flogging and stoning were widely imposed in various countries in the Gulf, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen. In Ras Al Khaimah (United Arab Emirates), a Sri Lankan woman and an Indian man were reportedly sentenced to 130 and 90

lashes respectively. The punishment of flogging was extended to traffic offences and reportedly to begging.

The number of death sentences, often passed after unfair trials, remained high in 1997, while executions recorded by Amnesty International increased significantly. There were at least 122 executions in Saudi Arabia, many of the victims being migrant workers sentenced after grossly unfair trials conducted in secret in the absence of any defence lawyer. In Iran, at least 143 executions were reported, some by stoning. In Yemen, two people were executed and crucified. In Dubai (UAE), three Indian nationals were executed by firing-squad. At least eight people were executed in Libya.

In Iraq, hundreds of convicted political and common law prisoners were reportedly executed in Abu Ghraib and Radhawiya prisons near Baghdad, and tens of thousands of suspected opponents arrested in previous years continued to be held. The fate of thousands of people who "disappeared" in previous years remained unknown.

In Egypt, armed Islamist groups were responsible for arbitrary killings of at least 100 unarmed civilians, mostly foreign tourists. Kurdish groups allegedly committed serious human rights abuses, including killings and rape, in Iraqi Kurdistan. In Israel, at least 29 civilians were deliberately and arbitrarily killed by Palestinian armed groups opposed to the peace process.

## Letters

### 'Best interest'

To the editor:

READING THE Jordan Times report, "Shukri: JTC may not need strategic partner" (Aug. 2) hits a vital and complex cord in our country. The report indicates things at JTC heading in the best interest of everyone involved. It is a breath of fresh air when it comes to preserving national interest, employee appreciation, and achievements being rewarded accordingly. Selling around 40 per cent equity in JTC with first priority to their employees and Jordanians, attests to the strong belief in safeguarding national security and allowing employee participation in the continuous development and enhancement of JTC. Will other privatisation projects follow suite, by benefiting the majority and employees first and foremost, before making the final decision?

Samer Qubain  
Amman  
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## The wonder in a coffee cup

By Marian Nimry  
Special to the Jordan Times

IT ONLY takes an hour to get there. I have gone twice so far, once by taxi and once in my friend's car. Walking or driving within the Baqaa refugee camp, residents know where you're headed and why. Through little alleys, guided by kids who have not been asked to do so, getting to her place is easy. Children point, direct, and shout but without any intention of wrongdoing or of testing the newfound intruders. "It's that house to your right," yelled a child of no more than five, "up those steps and knock at the door."

A young dark woman with a friendly smile and shiny black eyes greeted us and ushered us in. It was much cooler inside. We followed her down to the end of a long hallway. "You have to leave your shoes outside," said my friend, who has the routine down pat by now.

There were five women in the room, all sitting cross-legged on thin mattresses fitted all along the four sides of the room. This left only a square of cool tiles in the middle, on which was a little plastic tub full of murky water. The room had a surprisingly high ceiling, with one high window from which the light shone.

Having sat down on our chosen mattress, the four of us checked out the surroundings and whispered our growing excitement at meeting the fortune-teller. Questioning our most experienced friend, she pointed out the older sister and filled us in on what is going to happen. The older sister smilingly asked us the number of coffee cups we wanted, and then went off to make them.

"Some women drink more than one cup," my friend explained. "Because men are not allowed in here, women drink a cup on behalf of their husbands, brothers and sons."

The coffee was too sweet. After downing the sticky black liquid, I was told to leave the cup turned since that requires some experience. The sister poured what remained in our cups into the plastic tub. She balanced the cup, upside down, on the edge of the saucer.

The fortune-teller is young, 20-years-old perhaps, with one of the most beautifully peaceful faces I have ever seen. She had a light summer dress on and her black coarse hair was tied in a pony tail. Barefooted, she walked across the room, smiled shyly and knelt in front of the

woman who had been waiting the longest. Head bent down, she looked inside the cup and started muttering.

The room was full by now. The variety of people sitting on the mattresses was surprising. The young and old, the rich and poor, city and country folk all wanted their fortunes told. From a conservatively dressed woman with a covered head asking about her ailing husband to a tightly clad loud sophisticated who looked like she was having a good time, the fortune teller was fascinating them with her knowledge and insight. She hinted at some matters but was discreet with some others.

I was fortunate enough to be put in the position of translating what she said to two of my intellectual English-speaking friends, and so was able to compare different readings. Some of what was said brought a glimmer of surprise, an intake of breath and a turning of the head to look me in the eye. But the rest was so general that it could apply to most anyone. My English-speaking friends were impressed.

The fortune-teller started with a praise to God and then asked the person to think of a wish. She speaks incessantly for about ten minutes and is interrupted only by the sound of the chanting of the mosque. She is silent for the duration of the sung prayer. The fortune-teller also, as I found out later, does not read coffee cups on Fridays and after sunset.

She interrupts her flow of speech with quick questions and "Insha' Allah" (God willing). At the end, she asks the seeker to print her thumb at the bottom of the coffee cup. She looks at the print, utters a few statements and then reveals to the listener whether the silent wish made at the beginning of the reading will be fulfilled or not.

The readings completed, the fortune-teller thanked everyone and left what had become an overcrowded room. We hunted for our shoes and left the house. Our voices rose while each tried to put into perspective the amount of truth in the fortune-teller's statements. My most experienced friend was surprisingly the most skeptical. My wondering about her reason for coming back again and again was answered with a shrug of the shoulders.

A few seek fortune-tellers because they believe in this gift that some may have in seeing the future. Some do it out of weakness and despair. Many do it just for the experience. But most do it for reasons that they, themselves, as I discovered, cannot really explain.

## Bid to revive buccaneering spirit that spawned the Raj

A British businessman has launched a new East India Company and is producing a book to mark a commercial milestone in history. He and four partners are hoping to capitalise on the old "magic" of a famous name from a merchants' heyday that helped build an empire.

By Murali Krishnan  
in London

THE EAST INDIA Company — the enterprise that paved the way for British colonialism in India — is being resurrected.

Anthony Wilde, a 43-year-old Londoner who fell in love with the South Asia sub-continent when he was in his mid-20s, has launched a trading business under the famous old name.

He is also producing a glossy, coffee-table book to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding in 1600 of what became one of the most powerful companies the world has ever seen.

Due to be published next year by Harper Collins, it will not be the first book on the East India Company, says Wilde, but it will be "the most lavishly illustrated, the first whose emphasis will be on visuals."

Wilde is neither an academic nor a historian. But he has a literary bent, backed by business acumen.

He and four British partners in the new trading venture aim to provide a key link to help Indian manufacturers expand in Western markets.

They hope to capitalise on the "magic" of the company's name, which they have re-registered. They have also gained permission from Britain's College of Arms to use the firm's historic coat of arms — a globe over a pair of lion-like sea creatures, bearing a Latin inscription, Deus indi cap (God points the way).

For some of those with a sense of history, the magic might still be strong. The East India Company was one of four powerful commercial organisations which played a crucial role in establishing the British Empire, planting the first trading posts and building infrastructure such as ports and inland transport links.

The others were the Levant Company, Hudson's Bay Company, and the Gold Coast and Gambia Company. But the East India was the grandest of them all — active for more than two centuries, initially as a trading organisation, with the aim of making money, but gradually acquiring control over territories such as Bengal.

It administered justice and had a private army — the forerunner of the Indian Army. The company's power went into decline in the 19th century, and it was taken over by the Crown at the birth of the British Raj, which ruled India from 1858 until 1947. The company ceased to exist in 1873.

A three-volume history of empire by British writer James Morris, Heaven's Command, quotes arguments that the company's trading of Indian goods helped to fund Britain's industrial revolution. It was also responsible for assembling an extensive collection of Indian art, some of which is now housed in London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

Wilde does not have such grandiose ideas, and admits that "there might be certain sensitivities" over the company's colonial record. But in general, he says, he does not feel that the name will be a disadvantage and, in Britain at least, might help to boost his new venture's credibility.

He rejects the view that the old "John Company" — as it was nicknamed — was oppressive. That impression "epitomised the tough character of the

company after it began to lose control and was taken over by the Crown," he says, adding that the company had no territorial ambitions and believed in a free-wheeling and buccaneering spirit.

"The trading company was well known and many countries have deep memories of its activities," he says, returning to his business plans.

"We are keen to talk to Indian businessmen and establish business ties to export items," he points out. "Since markets are more evolved in the West, the East India Company can help potential partners in India or Sri Lanka to market their wares efficiently."

"Did you know that India Pale Ale (IPA), which was drunk by the British in India in the latter half of the 18th century, was brewed in taverns in the East End of London?" he asks, warning to his theme. He hopes to interest Indian businessmen in brewing and exporting IPA.

"We could do the same with other products that have a historical link with the East India Company," he says — such as the renowned Pashmina shawls from Kashmir.

Wilde's own interest in the sub-continent dates back to 1980 where he spent nine months in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province.

"It started with a boat ride down the Indus River, heading south towards Hyderabad," he recalls. "It was intended to be a two-week-long downward descent, but turned out much longer." The sights, sounds and multiple cultures fascinated him, and from there began his quest to learn more of the region.

The writer is an Indian freelance journalist who specialises in politics and the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Kashmir. He is currently based in Britain.

— Gemini News

## In a little book with big sales, Moroccan poet teaches France about racism

By Marlise Simons

PARIS — Tahar Ben Jelloun knew he was touching a delicate subject when he wrote a book on racism. But the Moroccan poet and novelist, who lives in Paris, never imagined how much his life would be changed by his latest work, a slim volume called "Racism, as Explained to My Daughter."

The prize-winning author set out to answer questions about racism posed by his 10-year-old daughter, Merieme. In doing so, Ben Jelloun purposefully described racism as a universal phenomenon and not one limited to France. He certainly did not expect the book to become a runaway best-seller in France, selling more than 250,000 copies since its publication in January.

He views the book's success as an encouraging sign. That France has a racism problem is no secret here. In a recent government survey, 58 per cent of those questioned described themselves as racist or somewhat racist. Some 56 per cent said there were too many Arabs in France, 27 per cent said there were too many blacks and almost half said they no longer felt at home in their own country.

Yet the rush to buy Ben Jelloun's book also sug-

gested that many French people were not only aware of this problem but were also eager to find ways of addressing it. And the book itself has helped feed public discussion of the topic.

The response has baffled Ben Jelloun and pulled him into the vortex of the debate on race relations. He is now called on to offer advice, to appear on panels and above all to visit schools. Being with schoolchildren, he said, has made him aware how much they talk and worry about racism.

"I find there is an enormous debate among young people," Ben Jelloun, 54, said in an interview in his attic studio overlooking the roofs of the Left Bank. "Students have lots of questions about dealing with kids from different cultures. And the questions come from both sides, from the French and the immigrants."

In the book he tells his daughter that being a racist depends largely on one's upbringing, on what someone hears at home or at school. "You are not born a racist, you become one," he writes, a phrase that is perhaps the book's main axiom.

Ben Jelloun maintains that the interest among children springs from the growing racial mix in the schools. More than ever before, schools that were

used to mostly white, Christian students now have children of legal and clandestine immigrants — Arabic-speaking Muslims from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, and French-speaking blacks from France's former West African colonies.

Teachers here say that it is easier for adults to hide behind their masks or stay in their own worlds, but that children in class face differences more directly and act out prejudices they learn at home.

It is above all the teachers and students in France, blacks and whites alike, who have seized on Ben Jelloun's book.

Outside France, sales are also soaring. The books have sold more than 200,000 copies across Europe, appearing in a dozen languages.

But in France in particular, the book's success is being watched as a kind of barometer of the turmoil over immigration.

Racism and immigration are constantly close to the surface. They have fuelled the rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen and his anti-immigration National Front, which routinely wins 15 per cent of the national vote.

The little book on racism has shattered the peace of Ben Jelloun's life, which normally plays out amid a jumble of books and art in

his studio on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. A psychologist by training, he has a fine sense for the cruelties even the most civilised people can inflict on one another.

For example, "The Sacred Night," his novel that won the prestigious Goncourt prize in 1987, and its forerunner, "The Sand Child," tell the story of a young Muslim girl whose father feels humiliated because he has no son. When the girl is born, he announces that the child is a boy and to save his honour he raises her to become a man.

His book on racism is written as a long and deceptively simple dialogue between the author and his daughter. Ben Jelloun said he got the idea one Saturday afternoon last year when he took Merieme, who was 10 at the time, to a street protest against anti-immigrant laws.

"On the Metro, Merieme began to ask: 'What is a law? What is an immigrant? What is discrimination?'" Ben Jelloun said. "At first I gave her some sketchy answers. Then I thought I would write it all down, so she could absorb it better."

That led to more questions and answers. Then Merieme's friends became involved. The writer said that many questions in the

book came from the children; others are his. But his daughter and her friends were always the arbiters.

"I kept giving them the texts and asking them to underline all the difficult words in my answers," he said. "That's how we got to a point where the writing became entirely clear and simple."

He begins by explaining notions like "stranger," "culture," "prejudice." About prejudice, he says: "It's a way of judging others before knowing anything about them. Often we make mistakes. Prejudice can make us afraid."

Merieme poses disarming and moving questions. At one point she asks if it is possible for her to give blood to Abdou, a black boy in her class. Would that work? Her father explains that, yes, the human race is one and the variable is in the blood group. He reminds Merieme that her mother, who is Moroccan, donated blood to a Vietnamese friend.

The book has been widely praised, but some critics have mocked Ben Jelloun as naive. The monthly Civilisation called him a "merchant of sweetness," and one television station said his book was "like a Band-Aid on a wooden leg."

— International Herald Tribune

## Fishermen caught in the crossfire pay heavy toll

Victims of the civil war in northern Sri Lanka include fisherman on either side of the Palk Strait that separates the island from India. Many have been harassed by guerrillas and security forces, and lives and property have been lost. Their communities are now appealing for greater protection.

By Mukul Sharma

RAMESWARAM ISLAND, India — Fishing communities on either side of the strait between India and Sri Lanka are counting the cost of being caught in a battle between security forces and guerrillas.

They are suffering growing losses — of life, livelihood and liberty — as they get shot at, beaten, arrested and have their boats seized or sunk.

Small vessels from communities which depend on local fishing are harassed not only by the Tamil militants — operating between Tamil Nadu state and northern Sri Lanka, where they are seeking an independent homeland — but also by security forces from either side.

The latter are quick to pounce on anyone deemed to have crossed the sea border. Fishing crews are often branded as terrorists, and, at the very least, get hauled in for illegal fishing. They may spend many months in detention.

Seventy-four Indian fishermen were shot dead between 1983 — the early days of the Tamil secessionist war in Sri Lanka — and last year, said Felix Gomez, assistant director of fisheries for Rameswaram island, which juts out to within 16 kilometres of Talaimannar in Sri Lanka. Another 251 Indians have been injured.

"It is because of suspicion (of terrorism) that most shooting incidents take place," he said. More incidents have been reported this year, and the fishing folk are now seeking urgent action by their governments to agree on measures to protect them.

One 45-year-old father of six tells of an encounter when he was

borrowed 500,000 rupees from a bank to fulfil his dream of owning a boat. But one day in 1995, when he and six others were out fishing, they were fired on by a Sri Lankan gunboat. His vessel sank and he was the sole survivor. He is now working as a labourer and trying to pay off his debt.

In March this year, an Indian fisherman, Sahay Raj, was captured by the Sri Lankan navy. "All our belongings — including our fishing catch, compass, radio and tape recorder — were taken away. We were badly beaten up and were released after 24 hours. Our very lives and livelihoods are in danger, and no government does anything."

Sri Lankan fishermen are also being caught regularly by Indian patrols. According to press reports, about 80 Sri Lankans were being detained in India in mid-July and 25 vessels were under confiscation.

A detainee in Madurai Central Jail recalls his April arrest: "Our boat was followed by the Indian navy or coastguards. They first asked

us to surrender, but we tried to flee." When they were captured, the officers told them they were being arrested "because the Sri Lankan navy is killing Indian people."

It takes six to 12 months to secure the release of Sri Lankan fishermen. It can take years for captured boats to be handed over.

Bilateral border agreements signed in 1974 and 1976 bar fishermen from crossing the maritime boundary. The accords have been a source of tension as the two sides have interpreted them differently. These should now be updated, say locals, and fishermen's interest taken into account.

The problems have been made far worse by guerrilla activity — including the 1991 assassination of Indian opposition leader Rajiv Gandhi, thought to be the work of Tamil militants seeking revenge for Indian peacekeeping intervention in Sri Lanka.

Both Indian and Sri Lankan security forces are wary of the movement of militants, and often swoop on fishermen, who also claim

they are harassed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas.

In April 1997, a number of Indian fishermen were injured when the Tigers made an abortive attack on a naval base at Talaimannar, forcing Indian vessels to act as cover.

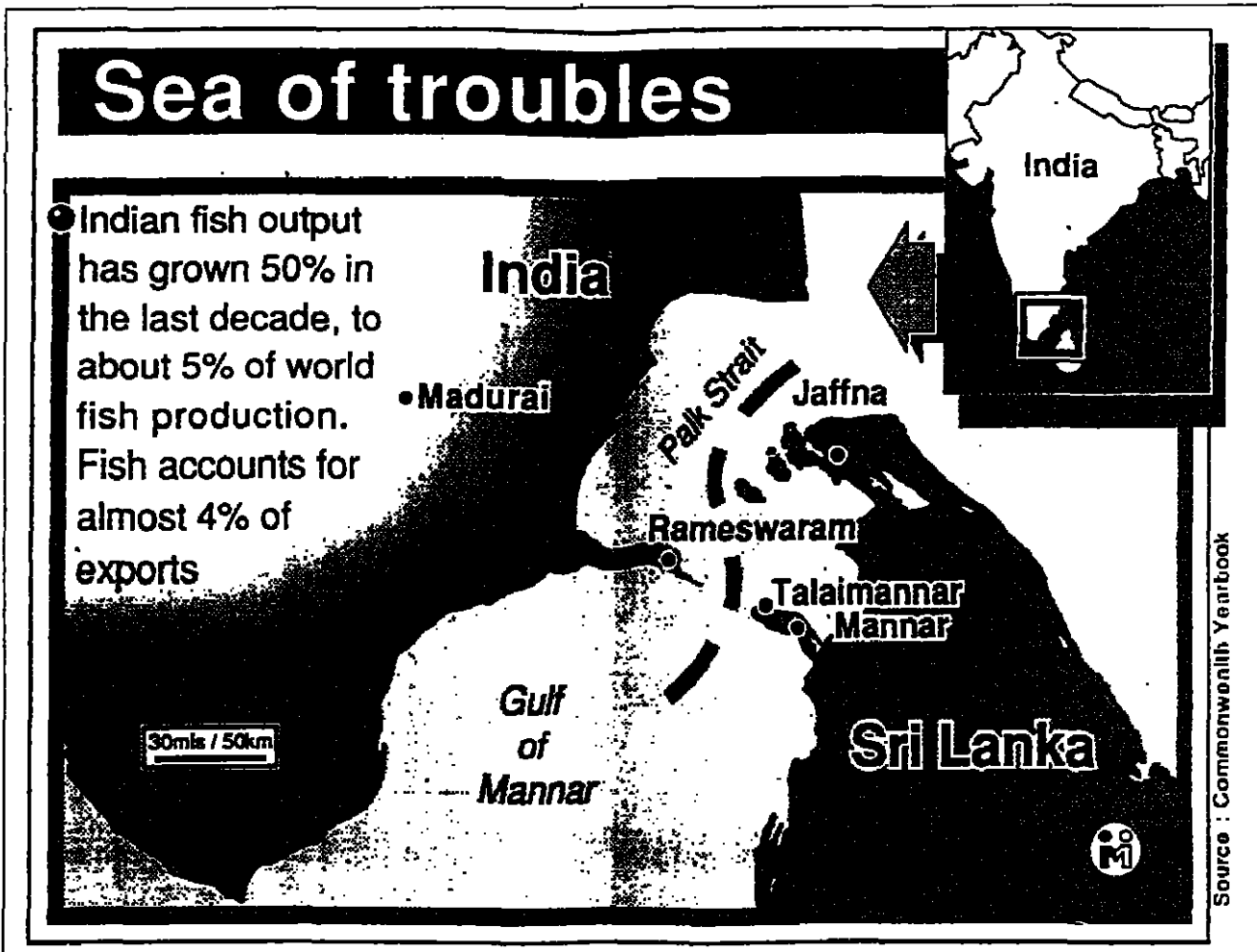
A Rameswaram fishermen's representative said guerrillas had snatched at least 40 Indian fishing boats in recent years.

One 31-year-old local, M. Sahayam, from Vercode village, said: "Although we have been traditional fishermen for generations, we are being thought of as LTTE or their sympathisers. When LTTE activities or the authorities' actions against them increase, the shootings and killings of us also increase."

Regarding the charges of fishermen straying across the maritime boundary, he asked: "What can you do when you can't see the border?"

The writer is a journalist with the Times of India group.

— Gemini News









## Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

### Jordanian, Egyptian electricity systems will integrate in October, official says

**\*\* THE EGYPTIAN** and Jordanian electricity systems will integrate in October, an official has said. The linkage is expected to save the two countries at least \$5 million a year, and the project will eventually link the grids of Syria, Iraq and Turkey, a process expected to be completed by year 2002.

Energy Minister Mohammad Saleh Hourani will meet later with his Egyptian counterpart, Mohammed Abaza, to finalise the final steps for the linking of the power grids, Jordan News Agency.

### Jordan and Algeria agree to cooperate in pharmaceutical production, medical services

**\*\* JORDAN AND** Algeria agreed on cooperation in pharmaceutical production, medical services and exchange of medical expertise, the health ministry has said. The agreement was concluded following talks in Algeria between Health Minister Ashraf Kurdi and his Algerian counterpart there, a ministry statement said.

The two sides called for further integration of the Jordanian-Algerian pharmaceutical industry through joint ventures, and sharing projects, and increased investments by the private and public sectors, the statement said. The Algerian side renewed an offer to provide Jordan's pharmaceutical companies with raw material for the manufacture of antibiotics.

Algerian officials requested an increase in the number of air flights between the two countries to facilitate the transfer of Algerian patients to Jordan, the statement said.

### Gammo urges private sector to help set up major truck terminal in Amman

**\*\* JORDAN PLANS** to set up a truck terminal in Amman to stimulate road transport in the Kingdom. Transport Minister Sami Gammo has said. He called on private sector companies and financial institutions to contribute to the project, which he estimated would cost JD10 million (\$14 million). The plan calls for construction of parking and service facilities for trucks and trailers as well as cargo storage areas.

### Bank of Israel sets leveraged buyout loan ceiling

TEL AVIV (R) — The Bank of Israel has said it had published new restrictions on bank lending for major leveraged buyouts.

Banks supervisor Zeev Abeles said the new directives were made in response to the increased use of bank borrowing to finance buyouts over the last several months.

"This phenomenon puts most of the investment risk on the banks, endangering their stability, especially in the light of the scale of these transactions," the central bank said in a statement.

"The supervisor of banks is especially concerned about this kind of lending because in instances where the banks have no additional collateral, repayment of the loans is entirely dependent on income derived from the company being invested in."

Among major leveraged acquisitions completed in the last several months were Yitzhak Tshuva's takeover of Delek the Israel Fuel Corp. The Arison group's purchase of a controlling stake in Bank Hapoalim from the government and Claridge Israel's acquisition of Koor Industries.

Under the new directives, the Bank of Israel said, a bank's total exposure to major leveraged buyouts could not exceed 100 per cent of its equity.

The central bank said it defined such lending as credits that exceeded 0.5 per cent of a commercial bank's equity or 25 million shekels (whichever is larger), which financed more than 70 per cent of an acquisition and depended principally on income from the purchased company for repayment.

The Bank of Israel said it would also require directors to establish a policy on leveraged buyout finance and to review their lending every six months.

The central bank said it was concerned that banks were increasingly lending for leveraged buyouts without collateral.

It warned that the phenomenon could cause borrowers to be less cautious in valuing takeover targets.

The commercial banks say that they only provide financing for leveraged buyouts where risks are low to returns. But the central bank wants the commercial banks to monitor their leveraged buyout lending on a sector basis to ensure they limit their exposure to any single industry.

### JTA to exhibit Jordanian products in Algeria next month

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Trade Association (JTA) will organise a four-day exhibition of Jordanian products in Algeria by the end of September.

The exhibition aims at familiarising the Algerian people, the public and private sectors with the Jordanian products and the advanced level they have reached and to promote trade exchange between Jordan and Algeria.

Some Jordanian companies export their products to Algeria, particularly pharmaceutical companies. Jordan has earlier signed a memorandum of understanding with Algeria for increasing bilateral trade relations.

Jordanian exports to Algeria in 1997 amounted to JD21.5 million while its imports were JD1.1 million.

### HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) This morning is a good time to make contacts and cold calls. This afternoon, there may be a test. An older person will want to know what you've done with the money. If you've kept good record of it you could win big and get more! Don't waste the morning. Do your homework.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) The moon is going into Capricorn. This will open things up so you'll be able to accomplish your goal more easily. However, those conditions won't be in effect all day. Going out to dinner with an old friend would be an excellent way to celebrate making it through a stressful situation — hopelessly unscathed.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) If you know any comedian types, try to get one to put on a show today. It'll benefit everybody and work will go faster if you all keep laughing. That will bring more money into your account. Keep the other people happy and you get rich? Almost sounds too good to be true!

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) You and a partner need to put your heads together. Between the two of you a solution to the problem can be found. Looks like your partner is the one who's stressed. He or she can't figure out how to achieve the objective. Offer an idea rather than a bailout.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) It looks like you're getting more attention than you expected for work done in the past. You could even get a bonus. People are starting to recognise the things you do and acknowledge you. Just accept the objective. Offer an idea rather than a bailout.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Somebody is pushing you to get a job done, so you have a hustle. You may have some time for lunch with your sweetheart, but you won't have much opportunity for a full-fledged conversation until tonight. Make plans to do that; you'll have lots of good stories to tell by then.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Your attention is focused more on home and family for a while. There's business to be handled there, so you may have to turn down an invitation to go out tonight. Not to fret; there will be more later. Get domestic problems handled first.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) This is a good day for learning skills you can apply on at work to increase your income. You may get a chance to meet with other people, and in that case, you'd be learning teamwork skills. Don't even answer the phone call from the friend most likely to suggest you pay hooky.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) The good news is you feel fabulous. You're enthusiastic, energetic and your sense of humour looks like it's in fine shape. The bad news is you need money so you have to stay at work today. Don't even answer the phone call from the friend most likely to suggest you play hooky.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) You should be feeling stronger. You will still be under a bit of tension, however. Looks like money is tight or some other constraint is in effect. No problem. The moon is going into your sign, so you can handle difficult situations as if they were nothing; you thrive on adversity.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) It's time to put up or shut up. You are a person of great ideas, but sometimes you take too long pondering alternatives. A Capricorn can always be counted on to give a push in the direction you want to go. Look at this as an opportunity and the Capricorn as your friend.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) There will be a test during the first part of today. You might as well be prepared. Study so you do a good job; it looks like you could be rewarded quite nicely for getting the answers right. Later in the day there will be a celebration.

Birthstone of August: Peridot — Golden Quartz




Department Stores

# TOMORROW SALE

## 20%

DISCOUNT On Everything You Purchase From The Second Floor

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - SHARISAT											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY											03/08/1998
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
S 355.500	170.000	ARAB BANK	17.8	92	29	6430	1405030	218.50	218.00	-50-	
S 2.100	1.520	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	13.4	4.2	7	8870	14635	1.65	1.65	-	
S 3.230	1.130	BANK OF JORDAN	8	0.00	4	1000	1153	1.14	1.25	.01+	
S 2.680	1.550	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	10.9	6.65	6	3843	5994	1.56	1.56	-	
S 6.510	2.610	THE HOUSING BK.	19.5	3.26	19	6300	19386	3.09	3.07	.02-	
S 3.450	1.790	JOR.ROMATY BANK	9	0.00	2	193	357	1.86	1.86	.01+	
S 8.772	1.590	JOR.GULF BANK	9	0.00	4	24600	14760	.60	.60	-	
S 4.000	1.690	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	17.6	0.00	9	945	1620	1.71	1.72	.01+	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 289.19	CHG: -0.23		80	52181	1462935				
S 2.630	1.200	JORDAN GULF INSUR.	9	0.00	2	750	1100	1.47	1.54	.07+	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 130.57	CHG: +0.32		3	760	1127				
S 2.240	1.470	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	10.1	5.32	3	516	797	1.55	1.55	-	
S 7.500	2.500	VEHICL. OWNERS FED.	9.7	8.06	1	200	474	2.50	2.37	.13-	
S 9.500	5.100	ALRAI	8.9	6.90	6	585	3367	5.70	5.80	.10+	
S 4.600	1.860	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.4	2.11	5	8900	16970	1.88	1.90	.02+	
S 1.070	.890	ZARQA EDUCATION	21.4	0.00	3	550	512	.92	.93	.01+	
S 1.830	1.300	UNIFIED CO.	5.8	8.40	7	2250	2935	1.30	1.31	.01+	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 110.80	CHG: +0.44		25	13035	25084				
S 4.000	1.840	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	11.1	5.88	16	4732	8844	1.87	1.87	-	
S 11.250	9.870	JOR. PETROL. REFINARY	10.4	8.27	5	200	2149	10.75	10.75	-	
S 1.570	1.000	WOOLIN INDUSTRIES	11.4	6.93	3	600	608	1.00	1.03	.03+	
S 1.820	1.050	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AG.	67.9	0.00	15	3101	3560	1.15	1.15	-	
S 2.740	2.400	ARAB PHARM. IND.	7.4	2.80	04	37501	99581	2.60	2.68	.08+	
S 5.800	1.500	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	6.3	6.90	2	750	1088	1.50	1.45	.05-	
S 2.940	2.450	JORDAN DAIRY	6.1	10.10	2	107	294	2.75	2.75	-	
S 4.750	3.150	JOR. PAPER CARBON.	9	0.00	2	281	885	1.15	1.15	-	
S 1.440	1.020	JOR. PAPER MANUFACT.	9.1	9.09	6	5400	5990	1.21	1.10	.02-	
S 2.890	1.750	JOR. PAPER CARBON.	10.4	0.00	1	105	184	1.75	1.84	.09+	
S 8.540	5.300	ARAB CHEM. DISTR.	7.9	6.99	2	400	2858	7.14	7.15	.01+	
S 6.380	4.700	DAR ALMAHA DV. INV.	6.5	6.48	9	2750	14639	.22	5.40	.18+	
S 2.980	1.770	ARAB ALUM. IND.	12.8	14.45	2	350	609	1.77	1.73	.04-	
S .590	.370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	1	100	41	.40	.41	.01+	
S .690	.450	JOR. ROCKWELL IND.	9	0.00	2	500	215	.45	.45	.02-	
S 5.500	5.500	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	26.3	1.92	2	50	251	5.50	5.22	.28-	
S 2.380	.780	NATL. CABLE WIRE. NFAC	39.4	0.00	26	19450	16146	.83	.84	.01+	
S .730	.510	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM.	9.7	0.00	4	1250	638	.51	.51	-	
S 1.470	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	14.0	4.72	1	500	635	1.26	1.27	.01+	
S .730	.390	KAWFER INVEST.	9	0.00	20	7500	3018	.39	.41	.02+	
S 1.300	.740	URVY. MODE. IND.	11.8	8.11	7	8900	6586	.74	.74	-	
S 1.060	.500	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	9	0.00	1	1750	963	.55	.55	-	
S 1.600	1.200	NATL. CHLORINE	8.6	8.20	6	25250	30805	1.22	1.22	-	
S 1.080	.750	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	10.4	13.51	5	2230	1658	.75	.74	.01-	
S 1.610	1.150	EL. WARE. READY WEAR	41.2	0.00	5	8000	9326	1.17	1.17	-	
S .890	.660	JORDAN STEEL	9.6	8.14	8	9600	8256	.85	.86	.01+	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 87.36	CHG: +0.21		239	141455	220031				
GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 178.74	CHG: -0.01		347	207431	1709177				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 03/08/1998											
T .410	.270	GENERAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	3	30000	12900	.41	.43	.02+	
T .800	.510	UNION INV.	9	0.00	2	20000	10200	.51	.51	-	
T .620	.200	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	1	500	250	.20	.20	.03+	
T 1.010	.790	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	9	0.00	2	11922	11921	1.00	1.00	-	
T 2.220	1.050	CENTURY INV. GROUP	9	0.00	1	1000	1240	1.24	1.24	-	
T 1.000	.850	ARAB JOR. INVEST. CO.	15.3	0.00	1	220	95	.25	.25	.05-	
T .600	.330	ARAB FOOD S. IND.	9	0.00	9	13650	3730	.35	.35	-	
T .430	.240	ARAB INTL. INV. IND.	31.1	0.00	13	18600	5022	.26	.27	.01+	
T .580	.360	NATL. WOL. ENG. MACHIC	9	0.00	15	32300	12822	.37	.38	.01+	
T .690	.580	MIDWEST FARM. 905	9	0.00	11	40052	20926	.53	.53	-	
T 1.750	.950	UNION TOBACCO 87.5	10.4	7.67	1	600	903	1.57	1.63	.06+	
T .350	.220	IND. ENG.	9	0.00	5	16250	3728	.22	.23	.01+	
T .950	.550	ADVANCED FARMMA. IND.	9	0.00	10	4337	2553	.55	.59	.04+	
T .700	.430	NATL. WOL. IND.	9	0.00	1	200	104	.51	.52	.01+	
T .760	.580	NAT. ALUMINIUM.	34.2	0.00	36	42588	29273	.87	.89	.02+	
T 1.310	.810	MUTEDIAN	9	0.00	6	5800	4988	.83	.86	.03+	
T 1.000	.710	AL-KHARAL PRINTING CO	12.0	10.52	1	1000	720	.71	.72	.01+	
GRAND TOTAL					119	236049	120754				
T : New 12 months high											
T : New 12 months low											
S : Stock dividend during the past 12 months											
L : Listed during the past 12 months											
P : P/E ratio is 100 or more											





PARIS (AFP) — Marco Pantani became the first Italian in 33 years to win the Tour de France here on Sunday after the world's premier cycling event finished on the majestic Champs-Élysées.

Tom Steels of Belgium (Mapei) won the final stage, a 147.5km ride from Melun to Paris, winning a sprint to the line to snatch his fourth stage victory.

In the final standings, Mercatone Uno rider Pantani edged out German defending champion Jan Ullrich (Telekom) and Bobby Julich of the United States (Cofidis).

The 28-year-old Pantani's triumph made him the first Italian to win the Tour since 1965 winner Felice Gimondi.

And he just couldn't contain his delight after mounting the podium.

"This will always be a great day in my life. Winning the Giro and the Tour — my whole country has waited so long for that."

"Despite the rain we hung in there right to the end to give the Paris public as great a spectacle as possible," the Italian said.

Pantani's win came after 92hrs 49min 46sec of gruelling competition in one of the world's toughest sporting events and was a

deserved reward following third-place finishes in 1995 and 1997.

Ulrich finished where he had started the day — 3min 21sec adrift with Julich 4min 08sec off the winning time.

Along with his Tour win, Pantani also entered cycling's pantheon of fame for another reason — he completed a remarkable double after winning the Tour of Italy earlier this year. That double, the 12th in cycling history, has now been accomplished by seven men.

The first was another Italian, Fausto Coppi, who managed the double-header in 1949 and 1952.

Jacques Anquetil of France followed in 1964, then came an Eddy Merckx hat-trick for Belgium in 1970, 1972 and 1974 before Bernard Hinault gave French fans something to shout about with triumphs in both races in 1982 and 1985.

Ireland's Stephen Roche followed suit in 1987 and Spanish legend Miguel Indurain went one better by scoring consecutive doubles in 1992 and 1993.

Finishing in drizzle, the end of three weeks of hard graft was rather an anti-climax with the race having been bedevilled by doping

allegations which led to the Festina team being banned and six other teams pulling out.

In the end, just 96 riders from 189 at the outset were still around to enjoy the denouement.

And although the crowds turned out in their thousands to cheer the survivors home, they could do nothing to wipe the enormous doping stain which has tarnished the race's reputation — possibly for good.

At least Pantani's team helped to give the final day a festive flavour by moving to the head of the peloton to show off their newly-dyed yellow hair-styles in celebration of their team leader's triumph.

Other winners were Ulrich's compatriot and teammate Erik Zabel, who won his third successive green points jersey, while the King of the Mountains title went to Frenchman Christophe Rinero of Cofidis following the withdrawal of Italian Rodolfo Massi amid a drugs scandal in the final week.

Zabel was as happy with his green jersey as if he had won overall.

"I didn't win any stages, it's true. But for me it's really something to have won the green jersey for

the third straight year in Paris," he beamed.

Steels, who was expelled from the Tour last season for throwing a water bottle in a sprint, also had reason to be proud as he scored his 38th professional win, even if his four stage wins were well behind the record of eight for Frenchman Charles Pelissier (1930) and Belgians Merckx (1970, 1974) and Freddy Maertens (1976).

"Now I love the Tour. I said before the start if I won two stages I would shave my head. Now I've won four I don't know what I'll do," laughed the Belgian, who finished 85th overall.

The final stage began at Melun. There was a hint of irony in that it began in front of the Napoleon III-style city hall where there stands a statue of French humanist Jacques Amyot, born in the town in 1513.

What he would have made of the debate raging over drugs in sport and this year's tarnished race is anybody's guess.

**STANFORD (AP)** — Lindsay Davenport outlasted an injured and erratic Venus Williams in three sets to win Sunday's sweltering final of the Bank of the West tournament.

Playing in temperatures of more than 90 degrees (32 degrees Celsius) that forced a 10-minute break before the third set, the top-seeded Davenport won 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 to capture the \$79,000 first prize.

The third-seeded Williams, who served 12 aces in her semifinal victory Saturday night over Monica Seles, had 14 aces against Davenport — but also had eight double faults.

Williams took two injury timeouts during the second set, and spent the last half of the match with her left leg and knee wrapped in bandages.

Davenport got a break in the ninth game of the final set to go up 5-4 and then needed four match points to close out the victory. On the second

match point, Williams hit a deep return that Davenport thought would out.

Davenport let out a little scream and didn't try to return the ball, then looked in shock as the linesman called the shot good.

"I thought it went out, but it probably went in because it did skid," she said. "It's tough on a big point. Sometimes you just want the ball to go out."

Williams had gotten an early break in the third set and taken a 2-0 lead, but Davenport broke back in the fifth game and then got the decisive break four games later.

Davenport kept Williams on the run in the first set, hitting sharply angled shots to move the teenager around the court.

Davenport got the only break of the set in the seventh game.

Davenport got another break to go

up 2-1 in the second set, and Williams immediately took a five-minute medical timeout and had her left leg bandaged. The injury appeared to leave Williams off-balance on some returns.

The trainer also attended to Williams two games later, and came out again two games after that to tape Williams' left knee and extend the wrap around her leg.

Williams then rallied, breaking Davenport's serve to even the set at 4-4 and breaking serve again in the final game of the set. The chair umpire then called a 10-minute timeout for the players "due to the extreme weather conditions."

**By Roufan Nahhas**  
*Special to the Jordan Times*

**AMMAN** — The Jordan Volleyball Federation (JVF) — after missing out on the last Pan Arab Games in Lebanon — is now eager to be part of the next event which will be held here in 1986.

With a loaded schedule to carry out, the federation seems happy with the "earnings" preparations.

"We are satisfied with the way things are going," JVF Secretary Shawqi Abdallat told the Jordan Times.

Being away from regional and international events since 1986, the JVF's plan now aims to seriously bring out the best of the sport for the 9th Pan-Arab Games.

Preparations for the big event include training camps and many

friendlies. "We have been invited by a Jordanian expatriate for a ten-day training camp in the Czech Republic. We will also have a 3-day camp in Aqaba," Abdallat said.

He added that the JVF missed the last Games simply because the teams were not ready.

"We have a carefully-studied plan. Things are different now. Our teams are more mature and ready to face the challenges. We hope to score advanced results and not just be bystanders,"

Abdallat explained that participation in any regional or international competition was put on halt for many years mainly financial reasons.

"We receive JD10,000 from the Ministry of Youth which is not enough to take the two teams (men and women) abroad for any competi-

tion," he added.

The JVF has estimated its budget for the Pan-Arab Games at JD 225,000.

"This amount of money will cover the expenses of the two teams, foreign and local coaches and other expenses," Abdallat pointed out.

"The men's team trains three hours daily since March , while the women started in June," he added.

The teams will have several friendly matches against Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the national teams are preparing for the Arab Volleyball Championship in Tunisia Sept. 6-13 and the first Arab Volleyball Championship for women in Amman this month.

**KITZBUEHEL (AP)** — Spain's Albert Costa needed almost three hours Sunday to beat Andrea Gaudenzi in a lackluster match and win the Generali Open for the second time after 1995.

Costa, ranked 14th, picked up his eighth career title by struggling past the Italian, 6-2, 1-6, 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 at the \$535,000 event.

There was little drama in the two hour, 50 minute match between two clay court specialists as each set turned into a rout after an early service break. Both players appeared to lose their concentration at times, with Costa regaining his in time to sweep the decisive set.

"Maybe my mind was a little tired," said Costa, 23. "You play every week, fight in every match and now and then you lose your concentration."

The win is likely to move Costa near a top 10 ranking, which the Spaniard held last year before slumping out of the Top 20. Costa, whose titles have all come on clay courts, captured the biggest tournament of his career at Hamburg in May.

He followed by reaching the Italian Open final against Marcelo Rios the next week, but was forced to drop out with a wrist injury. Gaudenzi, who has climbed to World No. 36 after a shoulder injury dropped him to 157 last year, reached his second final this year after winning at Casablanca.

Costa, who beat Thomas Muster in five sets to win his first title at Kitzbuehel, has now beaten Gaudenzi five straight times.

He is undefeated at Kitzbuehel, having won in both his appearances here. Costa took home \$62,400 for the title and Gaudenzi won \$36,700.



LOS ANGELES (AP) — Andre Agassi, blunting Tim Henman's 130 mph-plus serves with whipsaw returns, rolled through the Brit 6-4, 6-4 Sunday to win the Mercedes Cup, his 11th consecutive match victory without dropping a set.

Agassi needed just one hour, 20 minutes to win his fourth tournament of the year and second in as many weeks. He'll rise two spots to No. 11 in Monday's ATP Tour rankings.

"It's been a long road," said Agassi, who lost in the first round here last year when he failed to win any titles and plunged to a career-low 141st ranking.

"I've climbed 130 spots this year and 11 more to go. I feel like I'm better than my ranking."

Agassi's victory streak includes one Davis Cup match. He hasn't lost since the second round at Wimbledon, where he and Henman were practice partners. They had never faced each other in a match until Sunday.

"It wasn't quite high quality tennis," said Agassi, who collected \$45,000. "He did-

n't play his best and I know I didn't. We were both feeling each other out early on. Once I got the lead, I hit out a few more of my shots. He responded to some of his big shots well."

Agassi dropped serve just once against Henman, netting a backhand in the sixth game of the second set for a 3-3 tie.

But Henman double-faulted in the next game — the second straight service game — he lost on a double fault — to fall behind 3-4. Agassi won the match serving a love game with a backhand passing shot down the line.

"I don't think I played my best tennis," said Henman, whose semifinal finish at Wimbledon made him a hero in Britain. "To beat someone like Andre, you've got to play to the high level of your game."

Henman had eight aces, but negated them with seven double faults. Although he connected on 77 per cent of his first serves, Agassi often blasted returns in the corners or passed Henman at the net.

"I had him in trouble a couple of times and he came up with some good shots,"

Agassi said. "He was having to serve a high percentage of first serves with the way I was returning."

Agassi earned the only service break of the first set in the third game. Facing break point, Henman missed his first serve.

Just before his second, a cell phone shattered the silence and Henman backed off in distraction.

He forced deuce with a backhand winner, but then sent a forehand wide and netted an overhead smash to lose the game.

"It's not the first time it happened," Henman said of the chirping phones. "It's not ideal, but it's going to happen wherever you play."

Agassi hasn't faced a single set point during his 11-match streak. He was even hotter earlier this year, winning 13 consecutive matches until losing to promising American Jan-Michael Gambill at Indian Wells in March.

"It's like letting something ride on the blackjack table," the Las Vegas native said. "If you let it ride, it gets bigger

Yugoslavia was the best players is better so far than anyone with theirs.

The United States is missing a player in this World Championships tournament almost as hamstringing as Drac, former NBAer, is to the Soviet and injured player, former Olympic silver medalist, and former Soviet player, who left after Sunday's 95-55 score, following Canada's 1-3, where he was scored by Miroslav Beran.

There is 4-0, but the biggest reason which is also unbeaten as the team heads toward its final August 10 round of reaching Friday.

Americans 12-1 seem to have won a last week to Lithuania, 12-12 in the scorebook. The Americans, led by Wendell Alexander at Syracuse — led with a 10-day absence caused by the war, Yugoslavia returned to the European title and returned to the world.

Some stars or no — is just as good as Zeljko Obradovic.

The absence of players in the United States — who returned from injury — and Danilo and Drac — Obradovic said, "The American team has a quality equivalent to when all these players were in."

Americans at 3-1 were joined by the same records. Russia's 1-1 winner over Italy, and Lithuania, from the unbeaten Russian team, 7-0.

The victory was for reasons," said Alexis, whose team, led by Jimmy Oliver with 15, "I think after the team started to look for a better light."

Rudy Tomjanovich, who led the team up and climb as it tried to win the title, said, "I think the team is a better light."

State	League	Year	Score
Ala.	4	1900	10-0
Ark.	4	1900	10-0
Calif.	15	1900	10-0
Colo.	6	1900	10-0
Conn.	9	1900	10-0
Del.	7	1900	10-0
Fla.	6	1900	10-0
Ga.	5	1900	10-0
Ill.	3	1900	10-0
Ind.	9	1900	10-0
Iowa	6	1900	10-0
Kent.	7	1900	10-0
La.	8	1900	10-0
Mass.	6	1900	10-0
Mich.	12	1900	10-0

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TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA 1 <sup>st</sup>	PHILADELPHIA 2 <sup>nd</sup>	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Hisham Yanes Theatre
	Leonardo DiCaprio...in	Comedian Adel Imam .. in	Comedian Adel Imam .. in	CONCORD 2 <sup>nd</sup> Adel Imam & Yusra... in	ABDOUN <a href="http://www.cns.com.jo/Galleria">www.cns.com.jo/Galleria</a>	ABDOUN <a href="http://www.cns.com.jo/Galleria">www.cns.com.jo/Galleria</a>	STARTING JULY 13TH
	THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK	AL ZA'EEM	AL ZA'EEM	A LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR	Comedian Adel Imam .. in AL ZA'EEM	Comedian Adel Imam .. in AL ZA'EEM	The Authority in the Service of the People
	Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30 Additional shows Thursday and Friday evenings at 12:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30 Additional shows Thursday and Friday evenings at 12:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD 2 <sup>nd</sup> DRACULA Shows: 3:30 only	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30 Additional shows Thursday and Friday evenings at 12:30	Shows: 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30 Additional shows Thursday and Friday evenings at 12:30	Starring Hisham Yanes and the group For reservations call 4622155, 4625155







## Arafat to call cabinet reshuffle this week

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian National Authority (PNA) head Yasser Arafat will announce a reshuffle of his Council of Ministers this week, a move demanded for months by the Palestinian legislature, senior officials said Monday.

Senior members of Mr. Arafat's office and the elected Legislative Council told AFP that Mr. Arafat would submit the reshuffled cabinet list to the legislature during a meeting Wednesday in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

"Arafat plans to hold a meeting of the PLO Executive Committee Tuesday night to obtain approval of the reshuffle and then will submit the changes to the Legislative Council on Wednesday," an official here said.

Officials in the 88-member Legislative Council said they had been informed by

Mr. Arafat's office on Monday that the new cabinet list would be presented Wednesday.

Deputies have been demanding for the past year that Mr. Arafat name a new cabinet to replace ministers accused of mismanagement and corruption over the past two years.

Sixteen of the 18 current cabinet members submitted their resignations a year ago in response to the council's criticism, but Mr. Arafat did not act on the move.

The council has set several deadlines for a cabinet change, but let them lapse at Mr. Arafat's request, most recently on July 25 when the PNA president was abroad.

Deputies demanded however that the new cabinet list be submitted before the council goes on summer recess on Saturday.

No details of the planned cabinet changes were revealed.

A senior PNA official in Gaza City stressed that Mr. Arafat would only announce a limited reshuffle and would not submit a new government programme as demanded by many council members.

The reshuffle was expected to see the departure of four to seven ministers responsible for public services of the PNA — the interim body created by the Oslo peace accords to administer autonomy areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

No senior members of the cabinet were expected to be replaced.

New ministers were expected to be drawn from the Legislative Council or include outside technocrats.

At least two new ministers will be residents of Arab east Jerusalem to underscore Palestinian claims of sovereignty over the Israeli-annexed sector of the city.



RIDING THE CAMELS: Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Prince Abdullah and Prince Rashid ride camels in the Eastern Badia on Sunday. Prince Hassan made an inspection tour to the Royal Badia Forces and conveyed King's greetings to the troops (Photo by Youssef Allan)

## Economic woes add to calls for elections in Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Battered by growing economic woes and the crisis in the peace process, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced new calls from within his governing coalition Monday for early national elections.

Mr. Netanyahu held a special cabinet session Monday morning to discuss a recent sharp rise in unemployment and forecasts that economic growth in Israel would fall to a 32-year low in 1998, officials said.

The meeting took no concrete decisions but announced the creation of a broad-based commission to tackle unemployment.

Amid the optimism fuelled by its historic 1993 peace agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Israel enjoyed strong economic growth under the previous Labour government.

But since Mr. Netanyahu came to office in mid-1996 and put the brakes on autonomy agreements with the Palestinians, the economy has slid steadily into recession.

Unemployment reached a five-year high of 9.3 per cent in June and the Israeli Manufacturers' Association reported Monday that it was expected to hit 10 per cent next year.

At the same time economic growth had plummeted from an average six per cent annually from 1994 to 1996 to an expected one per cent this year, the country's worst performance since 1966.

The worsening recession

comes at a time when Mr. Netanyahu's fragile coalition is already deeply divided over the stalled peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

Moderate members of the coalition are threatening to quit the government if it does not quickly cede more West Bank land to the Palestinians to keep the peace process alive, while right-wing hardliners say they will bolt if such concessions are made.

Now senior members of government and Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party are openly expressing concern that popular discontent over the high unemployment could provide the fatal blow.

"The option of early elections has become more realistic during the past few weeks," one senior official close to Mr. Netanyahu told the daily Maariv.

Ehud Olmert, Jerusalem's mayor and a senior Likud member, called publicly on Mr. Netanyahu Sunday to hold early elections now while his popularity is strong rather than wait until the situation worsens.

Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, the cabinet's most popular member, also backs early elections, Maariv said.

Mr. Netanyahu rejected Mr. Olmert's appeal.

"I have no intention of holding early elections," Mr. Netanyahu said Sunday in response to Mr. Olmert. "The elections will take place in the year 2000 as scheduled."

But even Mr. Netanyahu's supporters in parliament are

divided on the issue. Before going on its summer break, the legislature last week gave preliminary approval to a bill calling for early elections.

Rising unemployment threatens to be the greatest danger for Mr. Netanyahu as it above all effects the Sephardic community of Jews from North Africa and the Middle East who form the core of Likud voters and back the second largest group in his coalition, the ultra-Orthodox Shas party.

Critics blame Mr. Netanyahu and his economic team headed by Finance Minister Yaacov Neeman and Bank of Israel Governor Yacov Frenkel for imposing tight money policies to rein in inflation despite the negative impact on employment and economic growth.

Mr. Neeman defended his policies in a radio interview Monday, arguing that "a fall in inflation will soon allow us to gradually reduce interest rates and grow the economy."

But the opposition Labour Party and many businessmen reject this strategy, insisting the government must slash interest rates and revive the peace process to restore economic growth.

"The government must opt for peace, drop its monetarist approach, invest in infrastructure and stop shifting huge amounts of money to religious parties and Jewish settlers" in the occupied territories, said former Finance Minister Avraham Shohat.

## Up to 40 Algerians killed as U.N. team winds up probe

ALGIERS (AFP) — As many as 40 people died when suspected Islamists machine-gunned a bus, finished off the occupants with knives, then torched the vehicle, according to newspaper reports here Monday.

The daily Sawt El Ahir reported that fighters from the anti-government Armed Islamic Group (GIA) stopped the bus at a roadblock at Fidi El Klakh in the south-west Sunday, cut the driver's throat and then set the bus ablaze killing at least five of the passengers inside.

Other papers reported higher tolls, ranging up to around 40 dead.

The Oran daily said the bus was machine-gunned in the forest of Tagoura and boarded by the rebels, who finished off many of the occupants with knives then torched the bus and several other vehicles.

The rebels reportedly took away several women passengers when they fled the scene.

An official statement said that 12 civilians had died, and that security forces had killed 12 of the attackers.

Meanwhile the six-member U.N. fact-finding team, led by former Portuguese Premier Mario Soares, was winding up a two-week visit.

It met President Liamine Zerkal on Monday, as the Algerian government rejected as outrageous a separate U.N. call for an investigation of the behaviour of Algerian security forces.

Officials gave no information on the substance of the meeting with the president, which was also attended by Foreign Minister Ahmed Aitaf.

The U.N. Human Rights Committee last week called on Algeria to investigate the role of security forces as a step

towards correcting massive human rights abuses in the country.

"It is outrageous that the committee has made grave accusations based on simple allegations against the institutions of the Algerian state," a foreign ministry spokesman told journalists Monday.

The conclusions by the U.N. panel highlighted persistent allegations of systematic torture, secret detentions, disappearances, ongoing massacres of civilians and the increasing use of the death penalty.

The committee recommended that "in all cases of massacres" an independent inquiry should be made into the conduct of the security forces.

During their 12-day visit, the U.N. team met government officials, political leaders, human rights organisations, lawyers and trade union and management representatives.

They also toured massacre

sites and the high-security Sorkadji prison in Algiers where hundreds of suspected Islamists are held, but they kept a low profile and refrained from public comments.

Fighting between security forces and Islamists, which began when the military annulled elections in January 1992, has cost an estimated 80,000 lives.

Algerian authorities forbade any meeting during the visit with groups "outside the law," meaning the Islamic Salvation Army (FIS) and armed Islamists. Algiers opposed the team having a remit to undertake an inquiry, which is why the U.N. delegation only had an information-gathering mandate.

## Algeria slams U.N. call for probe into military abuses

ALGIERS (AFP) — The Algerian government Monday rejected as outrageous a United Nations call for an investigation of the behaviour of its security forces in massacres that have terrorised the country.

The U.N. Human Rights Committee last week called on Algeria to investigate the role of security forces as a step towards correcting massive human rights abuses in the country.

The panel issued a damning verdict on Algeria's human rights track record in a document made public Friday following a two-day study last week of a report submitted by Algiers.

"It is outrageous that the committee has made grave accusations based on simple allegations against the institutions of the Algerian state," a foreign ministry spokesman told journalists here Monday.

Numerous recommendations were made to the Algerian government, such as preventing massacres, ensuring crimes were investigated by an independent body, and reporting of all disappearances.

But the Algerian spokesman, Abdul Aziz Shua, said his government had rejected the allegations "with indignation," saying it would

answer them point by point.

On allegations of torture and extra-judicial killing, the spokesman said five cases had been raised by the U.N. and Algeria had already responded to these.

It had also responded to U.N. enquiries about 49 cases of missing persons.

"It is a very serious precedent for an expert committee to base its conclusions on what it itself acknowledges to be only allegations which it accepts unquestioningly," the Algerian government spokesman said.

The committee recommended that "in all cases of massacres" an independent inquiry should be made into the conduct of the security forces, "from the lowest to the highest levels, and where appropriate, to subject them to penal and disciplinary sanctions."

Mr. Shua said it was "inadmissible" that the U.N. group should have made no reference to human rights measures undertaken by the Algerian authorities, such as the closure of detention camps for Islamists, a moratorium on the death penalty, and the abolition of special courts and anti-terrorist laws.

out the missiles if they are deployed, saying that they threaten the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and parts of Turkey including the NATO base at Incirlik.

"Today we are a step behind where we were a year ago when we had talks between the leaders of the island's divided Greek and Turkish communities in Tróvnick (in New York) and Giron (in Switzerland)," Mr. Chuzkov said.

Princess Abdullah is the 13th son of King Abdul Aziz, founder of Saudi Arabia in 1932 after a series of conquests. His mother belongs to the powerful Shammar Bedouin tribe which trained him as a warrior after he completed a religious education.

## Arab League chief meets Qadhafi

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Arab League Secretary General Ekmat Meguid met here Monday with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, who is recuperating from hip surgery, the official JANA news agency said.

Mr. Abdul Meguid said he was pleased with the success of Qadhafi's operation and wished him a speedy recovery, JANA said.

The Arab League chief and his delegation flew to Djerba, Tunisia, from the Egyptian city of Alexandria and then travelled on by car

to Tripoli.

On Saturday the secretary general blasted the United States and Britain for blocking his request to the U.N. Sanctions Committee to allow him to fly to Tripoli despite the air embargo on Libya.

The United States and Britain, both members of the U.N. Sanctions Committee, vetoed on Thursday Mr. Abdul Meguid's request to fly to Libya because the visit does not have a humanitarian purpose, a British diplomat said.

Libya has been faced with sanctions over its refusal to hand over for trial in Scotland or the United States two men suspected of the 1988 bombing of a U.S. airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, which left 270 dead.

Mr. Abdul Meguid was expected to discuss with Mr. Qadhafi an apparent shift in the positions of London and Washington, which now appear willing to agree to a trial in a third country provided it be held under Scottish law.

## Saudi Arabia's Prince Abdullah is already the kingdom's ruler in everything but name

By Patrick Rahir  
Agence France Presse

DUBAI — Saudi Arabia, whose King Fahd was hospitalised Sunday, is effectively already ruled by the monarch's half-brother Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz, diplomats in Riyadh said Monday.

King Fahd, who is in his late-70s, first ceded the reins of power to the crown prince for six weeks as he recovered from a stroke in November 1995.

Despite the supposedly temporary nature of this transfer of power, Prince Abdullah's influence over the kingdom's affairs has increased.

Nowhere is his influence clearer than in Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, which has seen closer ties with Syria and Egypt

and a thaw in relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Prince Abdullah's decision to push for closer ties with Iran, despite American misgivings, took place even before the election of the relatively liberal President Mohammad Khatami.

Prince Abdullah was also Saudi Arabia's representative at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference's December meeting in Tehran.

Under his influence, Saudi Arabia has increasingly coordinated its opposition to Israel with Syria and Egypt, especially within the Arab League, Gulf diplomats say.

Riyadh and Cairo both boycotted a Middle East economic summit held in November 1996 because of Israel's pres-

ence, despite U.S. pressure to attend. Syria has always boycotted these events.

Those within the crown prince's circle say he believes close ties with the United States can be maintained without sacrificing Saudi independence on every issue.

Prince Abdullah, for example, did not mince his words when criticising Washington's policy towards Israel during U.S. ministerial visits to the kingdom last year, Arab diplomats say.

The crown prince also has a strong hold over the kingdom's finances and its oil and economic policies, diplomatic sources say. In February 1996, he picked out a new finance minister.

Prince Abdullah, who has no full brothers, also gained popularity by imposing limits on the expenses of the

20,000 princes and princesses in the royal family, notably by setting a quota on free airline tickets.

He also set a limit for the telephone, electricity and water bills the royal princes left unpaid.

Even though King Fahd still presides over cabinet meetings, "it is the crown prince that the ministers report to and are afraid of displeasing," one diplomat said.

According to a Western oil company executive based in Saudi Arabia, the kingdom's oil policy is decided by Prince Abdullah. "We get the impression that he is the one in charge," the executive said while on a visit to Dubai.

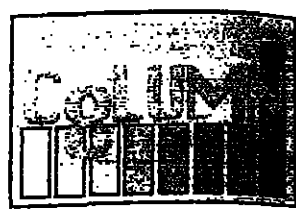
This gradual change of power is not unprecedented in the kingdom. King Fahd, who was then the crown prince,

himself effectively ruled Saudi Arabia while King Khaled's health was failing.

Prince Abdullah, who himself had heart problems in the late 1980s but has taken to a strict diet and exercise, is an austere man who has the confidence of the country's powerful tribes and religious leaders.

The prince was born in 1923 and since 1962 has commanded the country's National Guard, which numbers between 25,000 and 57,000 men, depending on the estimate.

Prince Abdullah is the 13th son of King Abdul Aziz, founder of Saudi Arabia in 1932 after a series of conquests. His mother belongs to the powerful Shammar Bedouin tribe which trained him as a warrior after he completed a religious education.



### Training courses to qualify Santas

LONDON (R) — A British college is to set up a special Santa Claus training course — and the Father Christmas hopefuls must not smoke or drink on the job. Weston-super-Mare College is launching the eight-week course and planning to set up a special national federation for qualified Santas. They will have to learn that children are little adults and should be treated with respect, the course tutor told the Independent Sunday.

### Vatican enters music industry

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — The Vatican is entering the big-money music video clip industry with its own stars to rival the best the pop world can offer: the Pope and Mother Teresa. The audiovisual clips will be kept separate, with one of them a special homage to Mother Teresa, who died last year in the Indian city of Calcutta. Pope John Paul II's video will include footage from his childhood in Poland, playing football with his friends, and his January meeting with Cuban President Fidel Castro, all backed by music from Italian singer Amedeo Minghi.

### Queen Elizabeth and Blair hope to save taxes

LONDON (AFP) — Queen Elizabeth II and British Prime Minister Tony Blair are considering sharing an aeroplane for carrying out their official functions in order to save taxpayers' money, a government spokesman said Sunday. "A number of proposals have been put forward by Buckingham Palace but no response has yet been made. The matter is still being considered," the spokesman said.

### Change in Chinese people's eating habits

BEIJING (AFP) — China's city dwellers, increasingly under pressure as market reforms take a grip, are now beginning to skip breakfast, a social research poll said Saturday. The traditional Chinese breakfast of congee, steamed buns and deep-fried dough sticks, is usually eaten at around six in the morning, after a bout of Chinese shadow-boxing which is best practised between four and five a.m. But the increasingly high-pressure urban environment appears to have changed Chinese people's eating habits.

### Man bottles urine as perfume

HARARE (R) — A Zimbabwean man has been jailed for a month after pleading guilty to bottling his urine and selling it as perfume. A woman who bought two bottles on the street without testing it only realised she had been conned when she tried the pungent liquid out at home, local media reported.

### Sleep revived Diana's dance at Covent Garden

LONDON (R) — British ballet star Wayne Sleep has recreated the famous ballet dance he did on stage with Princess Diana at London's Covent Garden. Sleep, who danced the 1985 duet as Diana's surprise birthday present for her then husband Prince Charles, is to present his tribute in a new London show this week with his Dash dance company.

Queen Elizabeth goodwishes to

His Majesty the Regent, Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, on Tuesday a message from the King and Queen Mother, expressing their warmest wishes for his speedy recovery.

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